FROM SHRINES TO SKYLINES

Nepal through our eyes

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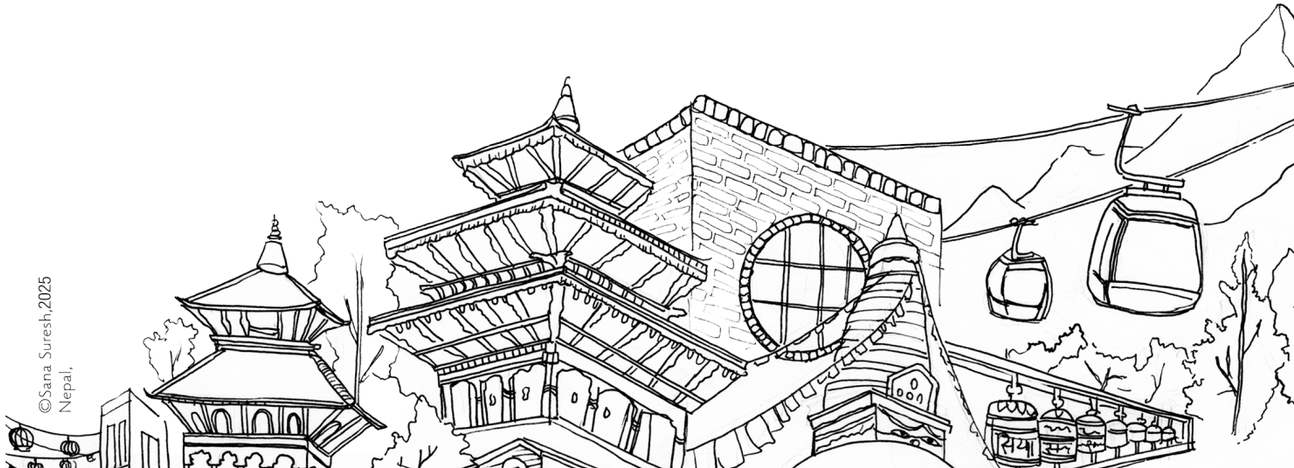

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Nepal.

FROM SHRINES TO SKYLINE: Nepal Through our Eyes

Srinivas School of Architecture
Srinivas Group of Collages
SIT Campus, Valachil, Mangaluru - 574 143
Dakshina Kannada, Karnataka State
Email: hodssaarch@gmail.com

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Hill Cultural landscapes are a distinct architectural response to rough terrain, where built forms seamlessly integrate with landscape. Centuries of adaptation have produced terraced fields, sacred nodes, and compact setllements-shaped by topography and sustained by cultural continuity.

©Shreynic, 2025.
Singha, Golden Temple, Lalithpur, Nepal.
A pair of stylized gurdian beasts-Singha or Vyala-stand symmetrically aligned at the Hiranya Varanya Mahavir Temple entrance, embodying Newar iconography and asserting spatial and spiritual threshold.

"Cities are a product of their history and geography; travelling reveals this narrative"

- Richard Rogers

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MESSAGES

It gives me immense pleasure to witness our students document their transformative journey from Mangalore to Nepal in the form of this thoughtful publication. This book is not only a reflection of their creative exploration but also a testament to the spirit of architectural learning beyond the classroom. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Architect Leslie Dias, whose guidance, presence, and mentorship during this journey greatly enriched the students' experience. His insights and encouragement have left an indelible mark on their understanding of architecture, culture, and community.

A sincere thank you to the editorial team - Ar. Caroline D'Souza, Ar. Sangeeta S., Ar. Shrvya Hegde, whose tireless efforts and dedication brought this book to life. Their attention to detail and commitment to quality have played a vital role in shaping this inspiring narrative.

I am proud of our students for embracing such meaningful learning opportunities and look forward to many more endeavors that celebrate architectural curiosity and collaboration.

Ar. Vasudev N Shet
HoD, Srinivas School of Architecture

With years of experience in both professional practice and teaching, I strongly believe that true architectural learning happens when students engage directly with people, places, and cultures. This publication, documenting the journey from Mangalore to Nepal, is a reflection of such meaningful engagement.

The observations and reflections captured here go beyond visual documentation—they reveal a thoughtful understanding of architecture as a lived experience. It is heartening to see students explore beyond classrooms, drawing lessons from the real world.

Efforts like these reinforce the importance of curiosity, sensitivity, and critical thinking in design education. I commend the dedication that brought this work to life and encourage our students to keep seeking opportunities that expand their perspectives. Such experiences lay the foundation for responsible, informed, and human-centered architectural practice.

Ar. Kumarchandra M.R.
Dean, Srinivas School of Architecture

(Last Page) ©Shefalica,2025
Bhaktapur.

EDITORS' NOTE

From Shrines to Skylines: Nepal through our eyes is more than just a compilation—it's a spontaneous celebration of an unforgettable journey. What began as a study trip by students of Srinivas School of Architecture to Nepal gradually transformed into this book, shaped by their stories, sketches, reflections, and the spark they carried home.

This book was never planned; it emerged organically from the passion and perspective of budding architects who saw Nepal not just as a destination, but as a living classroom. From sacred shrines to rising skylines, they captured the essence of place and culture with curiosity and care.

A heartfelt memento of architectural education, this book reflects how travel enriches learning and how memories turn into meaning when shared.

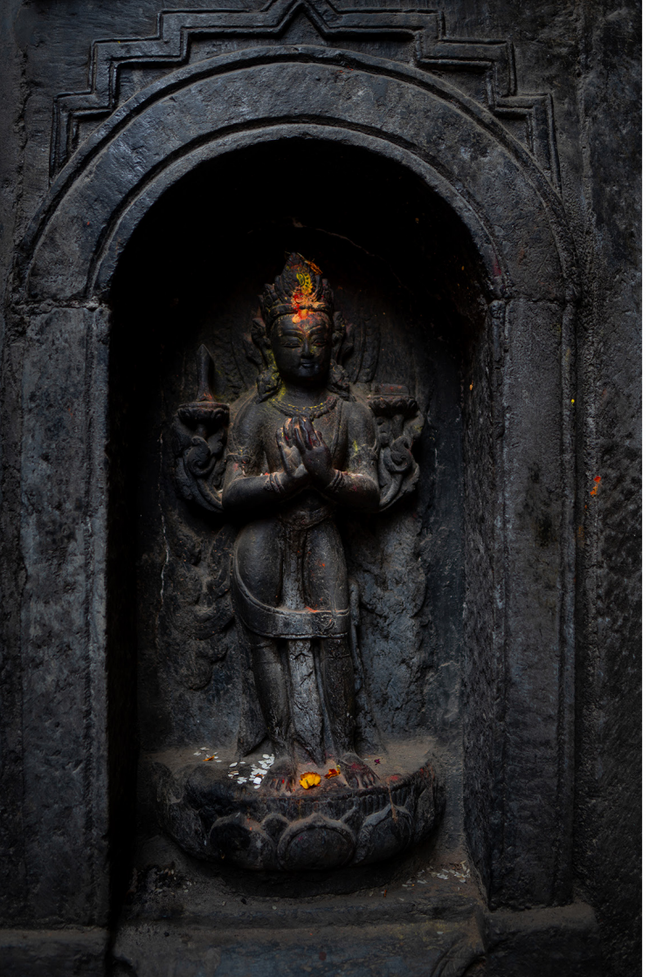
We are proud to present their journey—through their eyes, and now through these pages.

Ar. Caroline D'Souza
Associate Professor
Srinivas School of Architecture

Ar. Sangeeta S.
Assistant Professor
Srinivas School of Architecture

Ar. Shravya Hegde
Assistant Professor
Srinivas School of Architecture

(Left) ©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Swayambhunath.



©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Hiranya Varna Mahavihir Temple.

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We sincerely thank our **Dr. Shrinivasa Mayya D.** (Principal, SIT), **Ar. Kumarchandra M.R.** (Dean, SSA), **Ar. Vasudev N. Shet** (HoD, SSA), and faculty mentors.

Ar. Leslie Dias and **Ar. Colin Pinto**, thank you for joining us in this memorable study trip to Nepal. This journey broadened our perspective and deepened our appreciation for culture and architecture. We are also grateful for the guidance and inspiration that led to the creation of From the Shrines to Skylines: Nepal through our Eyes, a humble reflection of our learnings and unforgettable experiences.

This book is dedicated to all who made it possible.

JOURNEY MAP

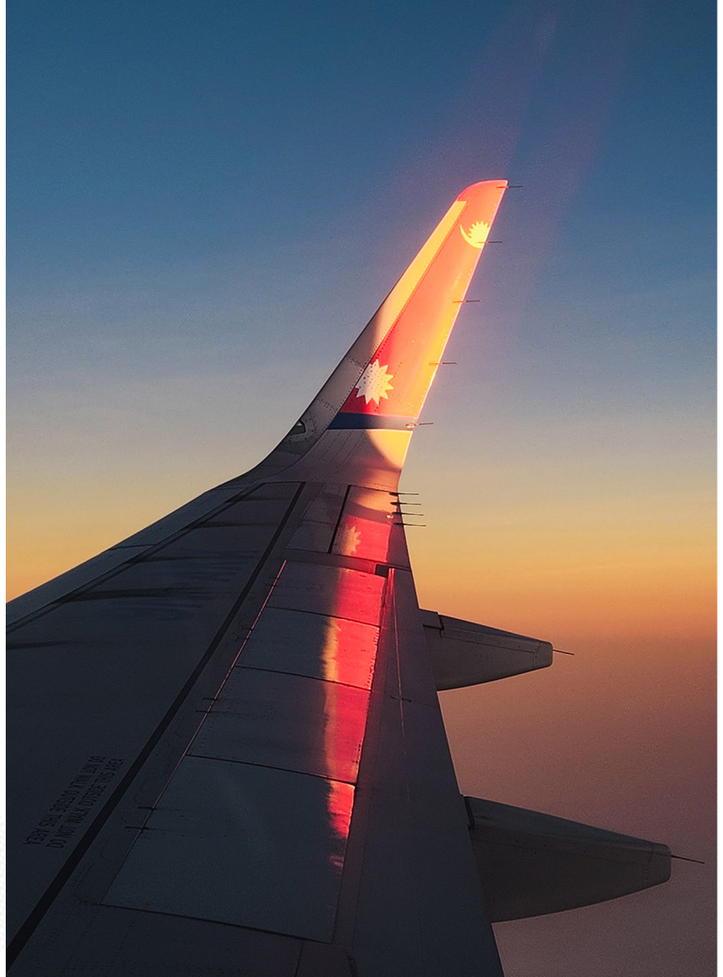
Mangalore

12.93° North Latitude
74.88° East Longitude
Avg. Altitude: 22 meters AMSL
UTC +5:30 Hours

Nepal

26° - 31° North Latitude
80° - 89° East Longitude
Avg. Altitude: 1370m meters ASML
UTC +5:45 Hours

©Sonyel D' Souza,2025
Journey Mapping from Mangaluru to Nepal



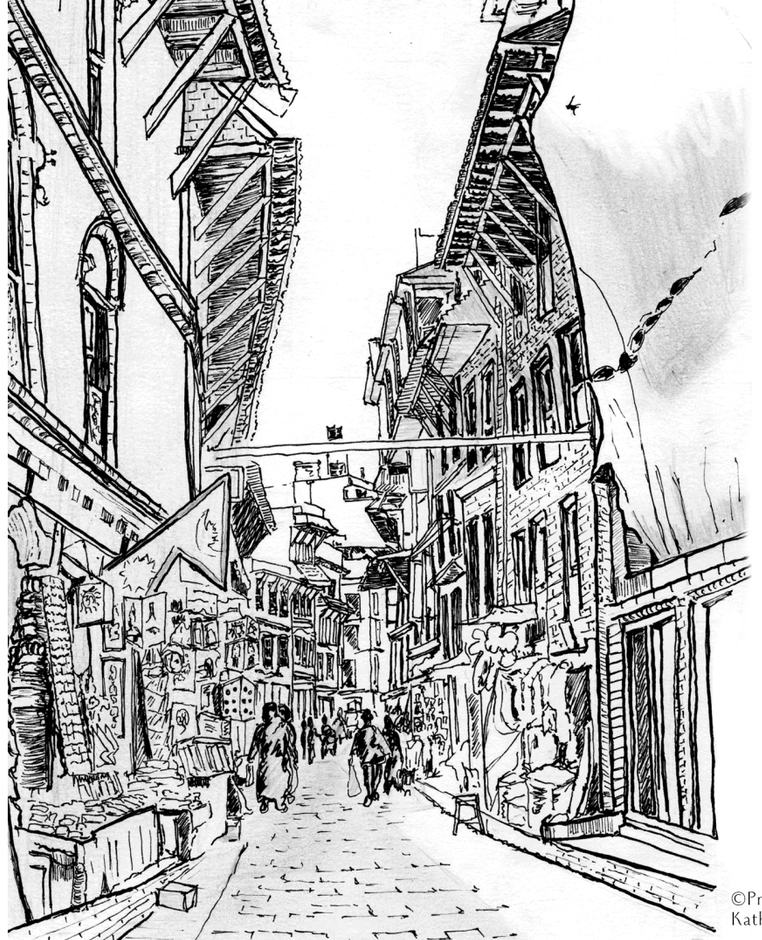
01 Namaste, Now Buckle Up!

As January came to a close, we, a group of architecture students from Srinivas School of Architecture embarked on a long-awaited journey. What once felt like a dream was now a reality. After a long flight, we arrived at Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu, ready to explore the cultural and architectural wonders that awaited.

©Monisha K, 2025
In-flight view of sunset.

The scene setting showcasing traditional Newar architecture, characterized by intricately carved wooden windows, red brick facades, and tiered brick platforms. The earthy tones and detailed latticework reflect the historic craftsmanship typical of Kathmandu Valley's urban design. The setting, likely a communal space, emphasizes the blend of social life and cultural heritage in these timeless surroundings.

©V.K.Vikhyath,2025.
Bhaktapur.



Kathmandu Durbar Square

Kathmandu Streets pulses with life: a city where the past and present intertwine in a vivid tapestry, painting the pleasant cold landscape.
Narrow streets wind through ancient temples and bustling markets; their stalls overflowing with spices textiles and warm Cashmere shawls.
The scent of sizzling street food drift through the air mingling with the distant chimes of Temple bells.

©Prajwal R, 2025.
Kathmandu Streets.

The lantern-lit street in Thamel beautifully captures the area's vibrant nightlife and pedestrian-oriented design. The glowing lanterns not only enhance the festive atmosphere but also invite locals and tourists to linger, stroll, and socialize, turning the street into an active public realm after dark. Reflecting Jane Jacobs' "eyes on the street" approach, the close-set buildings with transparent shopfronts, balconies, and continuous foot traffic create a safe, watchful environment where social interaction and informal surveillance thrive-making it a true people's street.

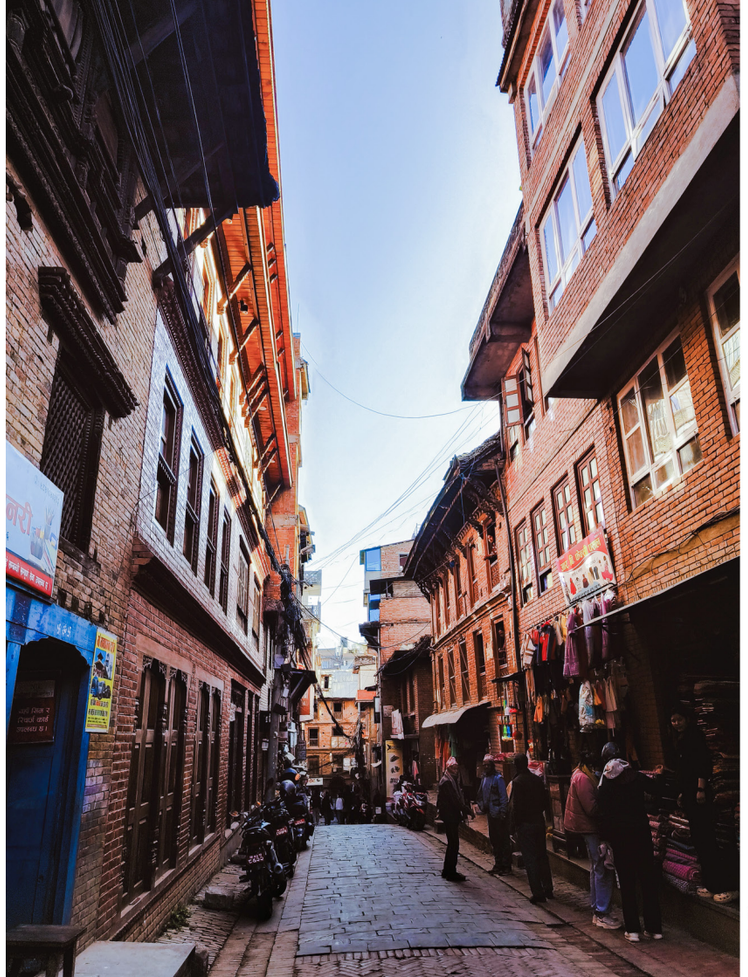
©Syamkrishna C., 2025.
Thamel, Kathmandu.

A traditional Newar-style temple in Thamel, distinguished by its ornate multi-tiered pagoda roof, richly adorned with gilded carvings and intricate woodwork. Illuminated warmly against the night, it provides as a communal spot for people to stand under it, sheilding themselves from the elements. The temple's facade features decorative struts, toranas, and a golden deity shrine, reflecting the vibrant spiritual and artistic heritage of the Kathmandu Valley. The surrounding narrow streets and historic buildings add to the temple's intimate and culturally immersive urban setting as it acts as a landmark in the fast developing setting.

©Raghuveer Prabhu, 2025.
Thamel, Kathmandu.

The Kathmandu marketplace captures the dynamic and dense urban fabric of the area, characterized by narrow streets flanked by closely packed buildings with mixed-use frontages. The building interfaces are highly interactive, with commercial activities spilling onto the street-shopfronts display goods directly to pedestrians, creating a vibrant and human-scaled retail experience. The narrow street module, combined with overhanging balconies, extended awnings, and projecting upper stories, acts as effective self-shading devices, helping to moderate the intense sunlight and create a comfortable microclimate for shoppers and vendors alike.

©Gaurav, 2025.
Narrow Shopping Streets, Kathmandu.

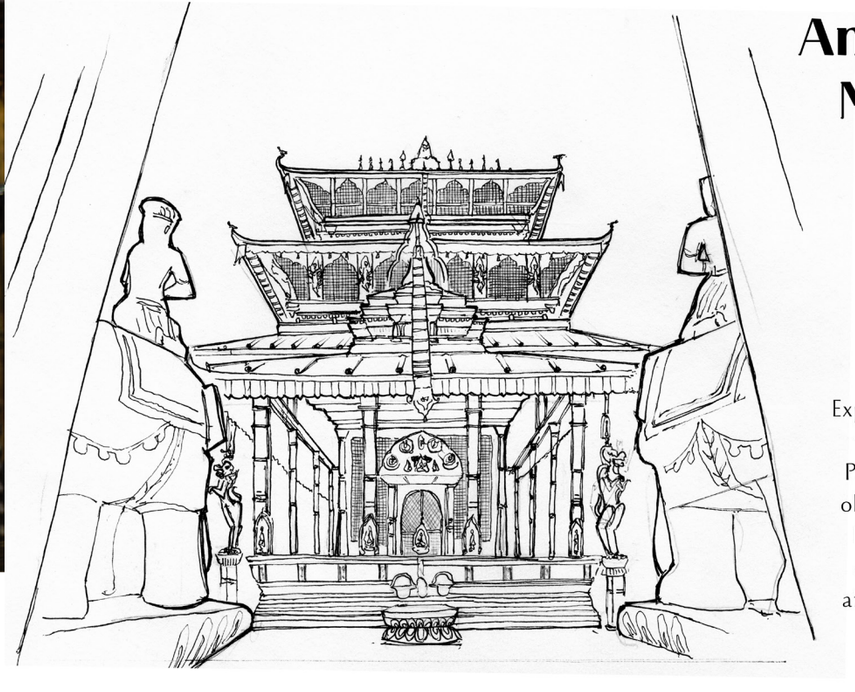


Bhaktapur's narrow street showcases a vibrant architectural corridor defined by brick façades and timber detailing, reflecting centuries of craftsmanship. Post-earthquake reconstruction introduced concrete lintels and seismic-resistant methods, subtly integrated to preserve the city's visual and cultural integrity. Despite being in a high seismic zone, Bhaktapur has successfully retained its ornate traditional elements, ensuring the continuity of its historic streetscape. The fusion of heritage and modern structural reinforcements is a testament to resilient urban conservation. The stone-paved ground, worn by time and tradition, is more than a path—it's a memory map of daily rituals and celebrations, grounding the street in lived experience and place identity.

©Shefalica, 2025.
Streets of Bhakthapur.

Image showcasing a richly carved timber post and beam structure at the Hiranya Varna Mahavihar Temple, featuring intricate detailing and traditional motifs typical of Newar architecture. The ornate wooden elements exhibit signs of weathering and reuse, reflecting a long-standing tradition of repurposing aged timber in heritage restoration. In newer additions, concrete lintels are discreetly integrated above timber posts to reinforce structural stability while preserving the temple's historic aesthetic.

©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Hiranya Varna Mahavihar Temple, Patan Durbar Square.



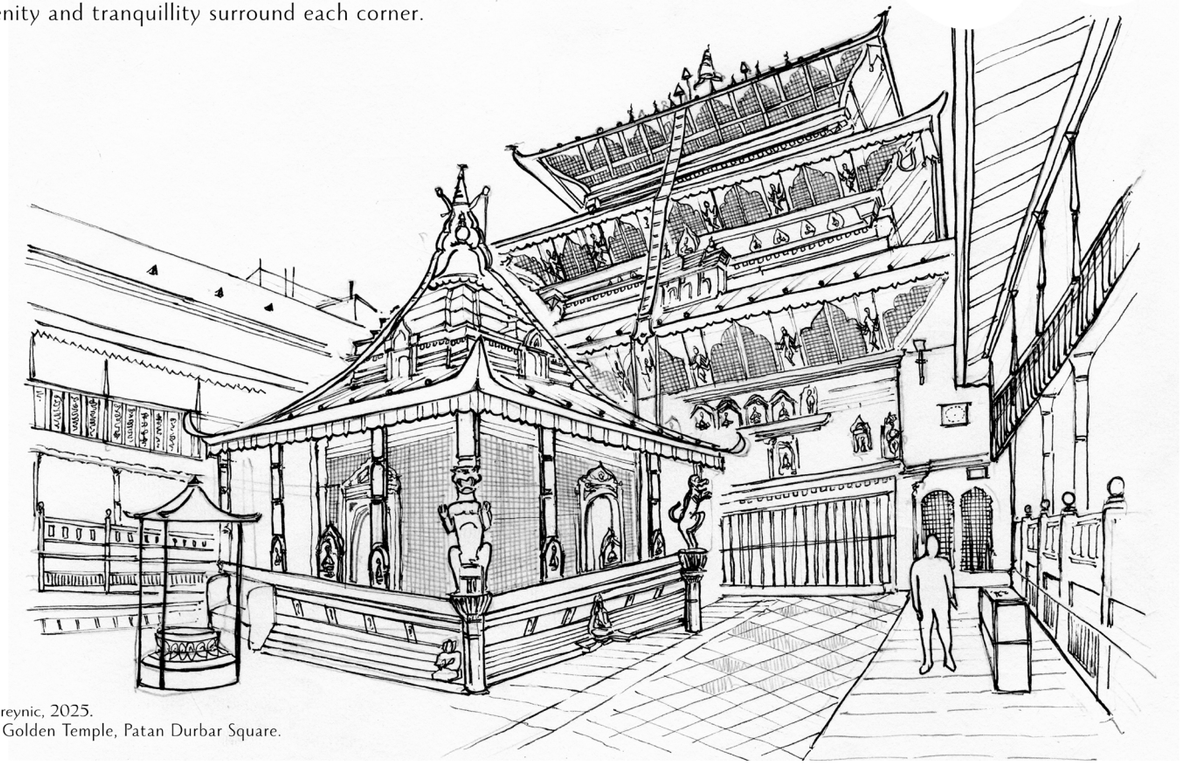
02 Golden Gates Ancient Arcades, Modern Minds

Exploring Kathmandu's southern suburb, we immersed ourselves in history at Patan Durbar Square, the heart of the old city. We then visited the esteemed Pulchowk Campus, home to Nepal's second-oldest engineering institute, affiliated with Tribhuvan University. It was an honour to witness such architectural legacy.

©Shreynic, 2025.
Front elevation of the Hiranya Varna Mahvihir Temple

Hiranya Varna Mahavihar Temple

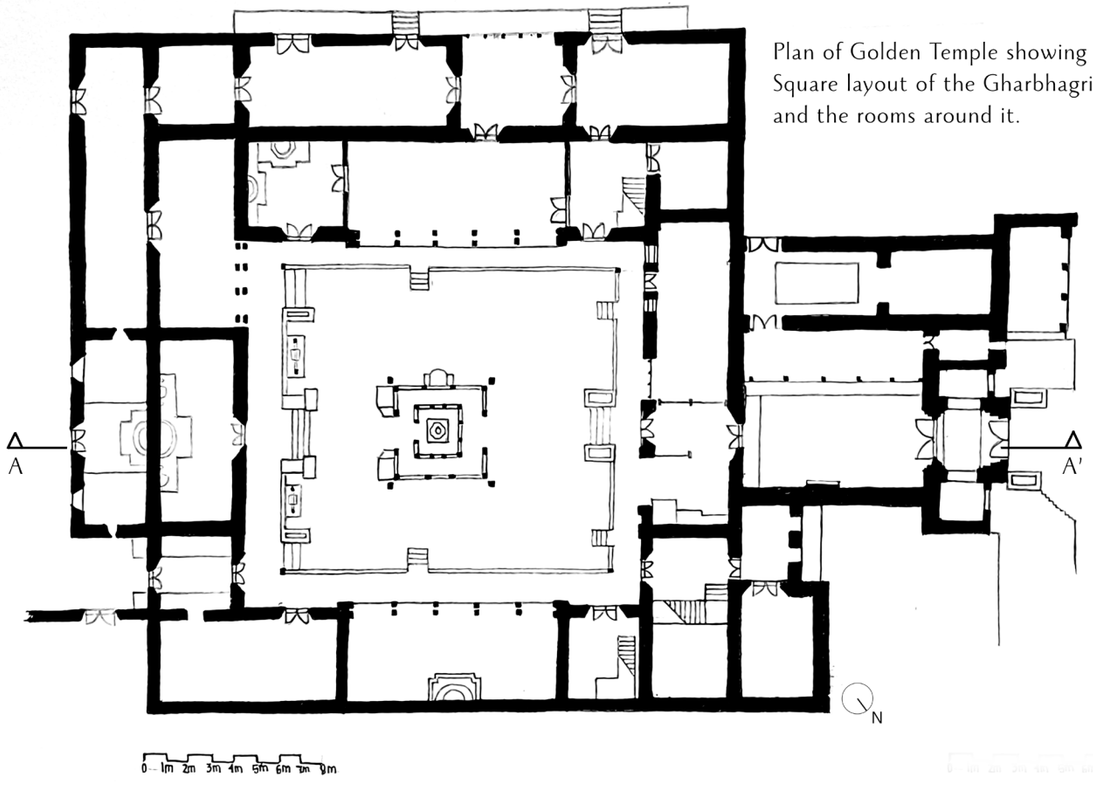
The Hiranya Varna Mahavihar Temple, also known as Golden temple and *Kwa Bahal*, is an independent heritage and spiritual site. Sunlight sparkles over the exquisite gold and crinkle-cut ladder sculptures, which tells the stories of devotion from long ago. Upon entering, it can feel like walking into a world of its own where time is suspended and serenity and tranquillity surround each corner.



©Shreynic, 2025.
The Golden Temple, Patan Durbar Square.

The Hiranya Varna Mahavihar, or Golden Temple, is a 12th-century Buddhist monastery in Patan, famed for its radiant brass and gilt copper detailing that reflects traditional Newar Buddhist architecture. Its richly adorned toranas, stone lions, and central chaitya evoke sacred grandeur. Hill architecture has a long standing tradition of using brass as the material of ornamentation. Interstingly the formation of the Himalayas exposed mineral-rich rocks, giving rise to copper and zinc deposits. These elements enabled artisans to craft brass, which became a key material in embellishing this revered temple.

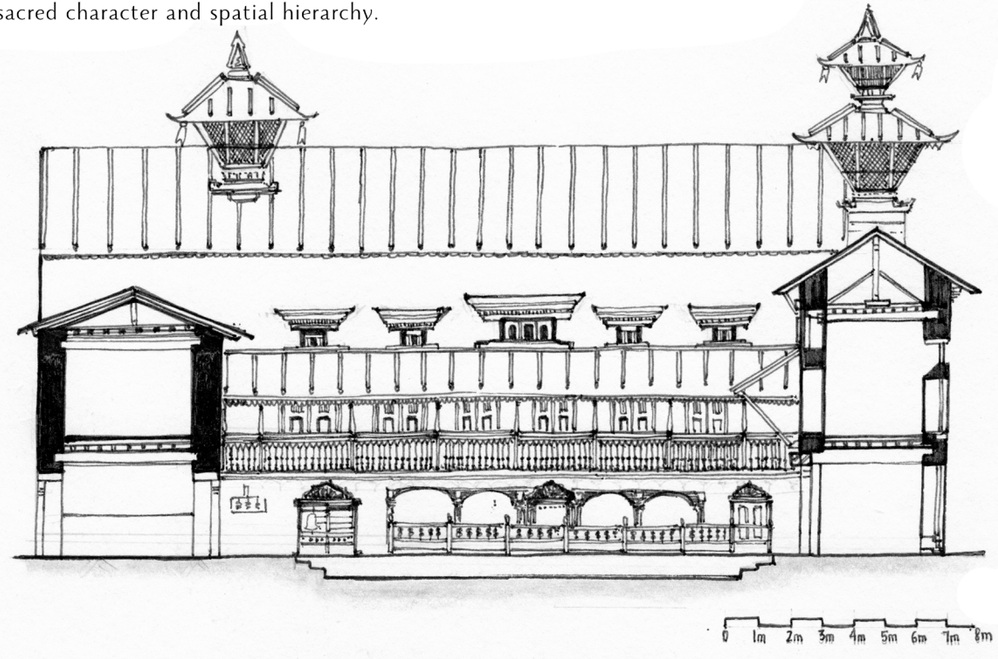
©Tanisha Haneef, 2025.
Richly adorned entrance of the Hiranya Varna Mahavihar Temple.



Plan of Golden Temple showing the Square layout of the Gharbhagriha and the rooms around it.

©Shreynic, 2025.
Plan of Hiranya Varna Mahavihar Temple
Source: Adapted from https://www.orientalarchitecture.com/sid/1924/nepal/patan/kwa-bahal-golden-temple

This architectural section of the Golden temple reveals its symmetrical layout, featuring intricately detailed timber struts and tiered roofs that reflect traditional Newar craftsmanship. The multi-level design includes open arcades at the ground level, central shrines, and richly ornamented fenestration, topped by iconic pagoda-style towers that emphasize its sacred character and spatial hierarchy.



SECTION A-A'

©Shreynic, 2025.
Section of Hiranya Varna Mahavihar Temple.
Source: Adapted from https://goi-intachinnepal.intach.org/hiranya-varna-mahavihar/

Patan Durbar Square

In the heart of Lalitpur, the Patan Durbar Square is a breathtaking testament to the city's rich history.This ancient palace complex is known for its exquisite architecture, detailed timber carvings, and historic temples, all reflecting the artistic and cultural legacy of the Malla dynasty that reigned these hills. Undeterred by modern times, the square remains a vibrant center of Nepali heritage, where history, art, and spirituality come together.

(Left) ©Samruddhi K, 2025.
Arial view, Patan Durbar Square.

Krishna Mandir

The iconic Krishna Mandir in Patan Durbar Square, a striking three-storied stone temple is built in the Shikhara architectural style. Its finely carved stonework and elevated plinth distinguish it from the predominantly brick structures around. The temple's tiered design is crowned with miniature domed chhatris, adding vertical emphasis and sacred symbolism. As a rare all-stone Hindu temple in the valley, it stands as a masterpiece of craftsmanship and devotion.

(Right) ©Monisha K, 2025.
Patan Durbar Square, Lalitpur.

Mahabuddha Stupa

A serene stupa in Patan Durbar Square, characterized by its dome-shaped form and spire adorned with a golden pinnacle. In the foreground, smaller intricately carved stone shrines add depth and reverence to the space. The juxtaposition of the stupa with the surrounding heritage buildings and modern constructions highlights a dramatic shift in scale and materiality, creating a rich and

©Gaurav, 2025.
Stupa, Patan Durbar Square, Lalitpur.

Pulchowk Campus

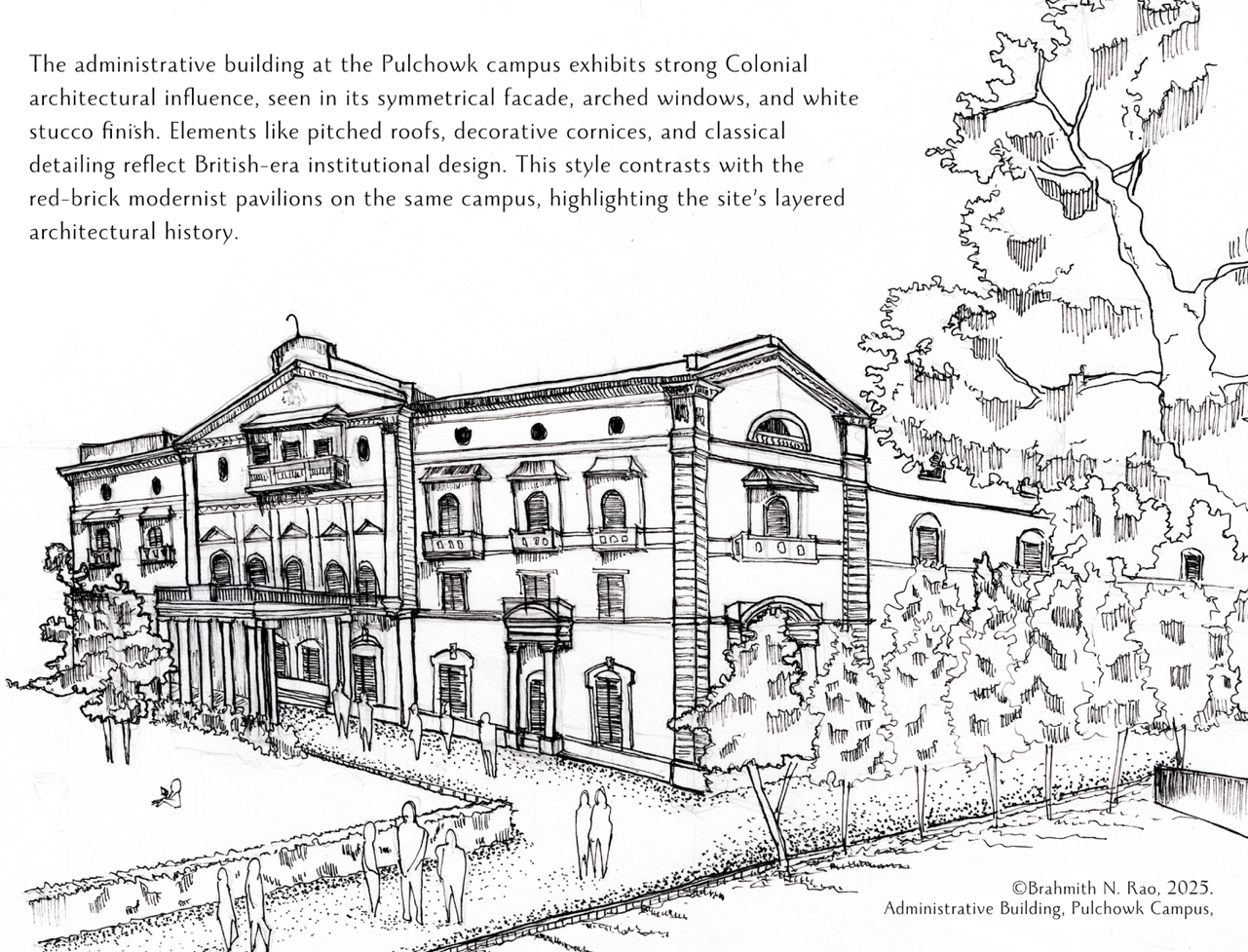
The architecture block of Pulchowk Campus, features a modernist approach with exposed brickwork and repetitive geometric forms. The building's dynamic facade is accentuated by bold, column projections and rectangular voids, offering both visual rhythm and functional shading. The use of traditional brick as the primary material ties the structure to its local context while embracing contemporary architectural sensibilities.

Gaurav, 2025.
chitectural block, Pulchowk Campus, Lalitpur.

The architecture block at Pulchowk Campus features a modernist design with exposed brickwork, horizontal window bands, and a distinctive cylindrical staircase tower that lea to the terrace which provides breathtaking vi of the Himalayan ranges. Its integration with open green spaces encourages interaction anc complements the academic setting.

©Gaurav, 2025.
Architectural block, Pulchowk Campus, Lalitpur.

The administrative building at the Pulchowk campus exhibits strong Colonial architectural influence, seen in its symmetrical facade, arched windows, and white stucco finish. Elements like pitched roofs, decorative cornices, and classical detailing reflect British-era institutional design. This style contrasts with the red-brick modernist pavilions on the same campus, highlighting the site's layered architectural history.



©Brahmith N. Rao, 2025.
Administrative Building, Pulchowk Campus,

A man offering prayers to a shrine housing Lord Ganesha. The sculpture is intricately carved from black basalt, a volcanic stone commonly used in traditional Nepali and South Asian religious iconography for its durability and sacred significance.

©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Kathmandu Durbar Square.

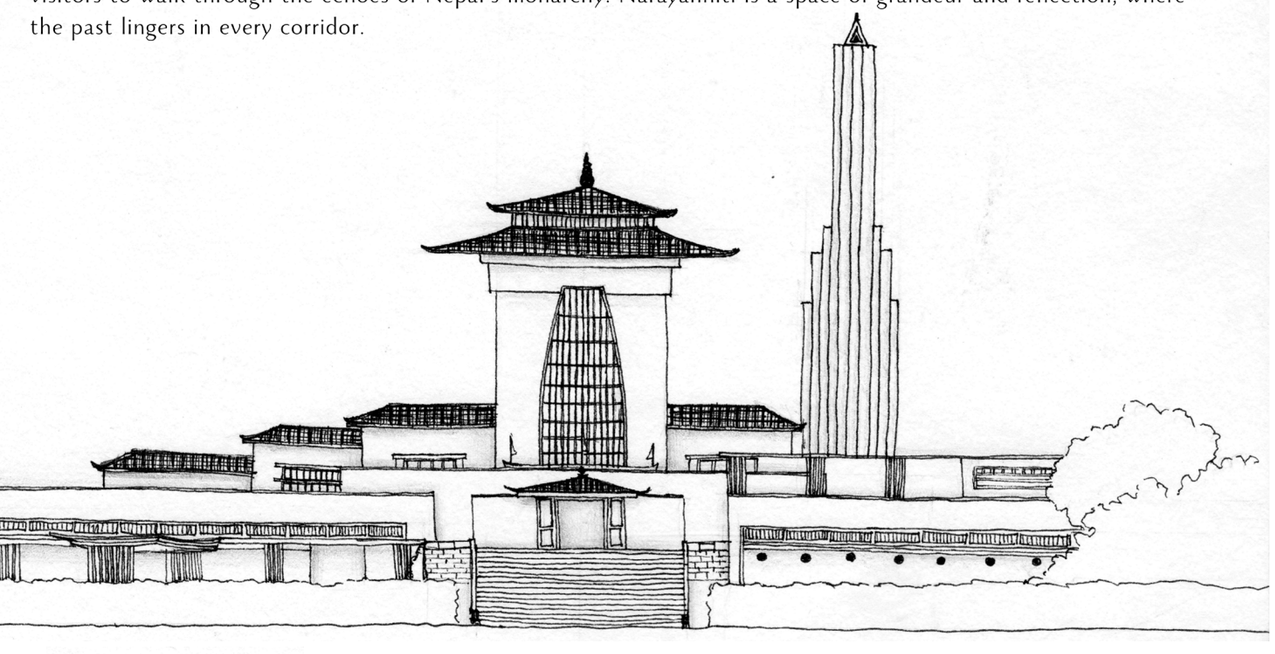
©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Kathmandu Durbar Square.

03 A Royal Encounter

A journey into Nepal's regal past began at Narayanhiti Palace, once home to its kings. We then explored the grandeur of Durbar Square, where we caught a rare glimpse of the revered Living Goddess.

Narayanhiti Palace

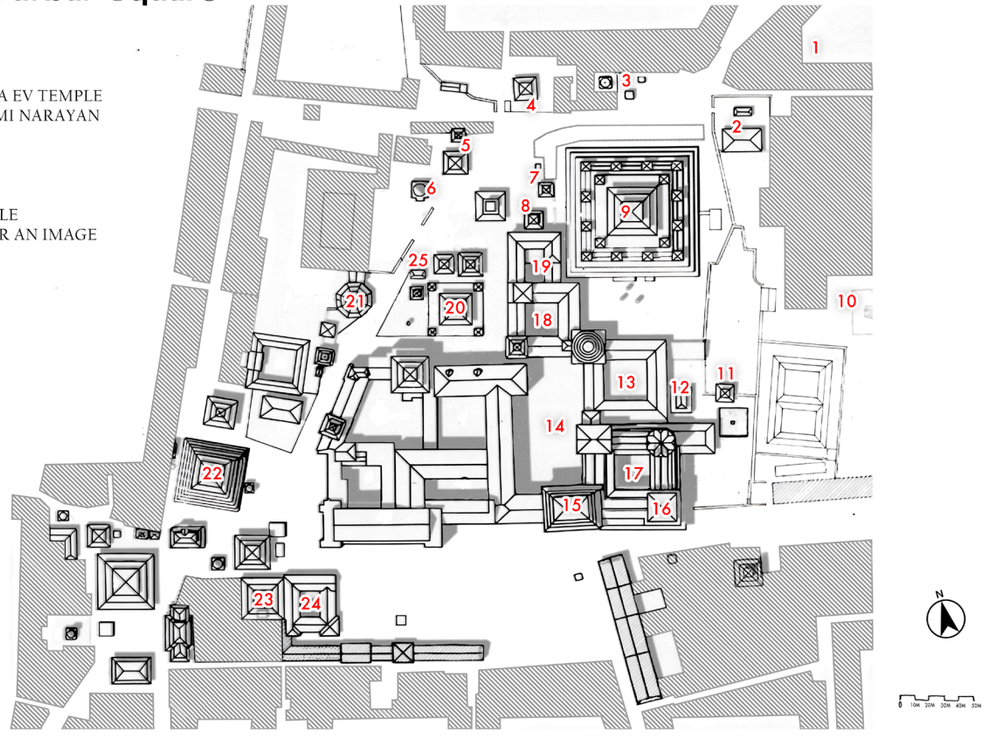
The majestic gates of Narayanhiti Palace stand tall in central Kathmandu, reflecting Nepal's rich yet turbulent history. Rebuilt under King Mahendra by architect Benjamin Polk, the palace blends traditional Nepali pagoda architecture with mid-20th-century modern design. Spanning 94 acres, its 52 rooms represent Nepal's districts and mountains, adorned with intricate timber work, chandeliers, and regal furnishings. Once a royal residence, it now serves as a museum, allowing visitors to walk through the echoes of Nepal's monarchy. Narayanhiti is a space of grandeur and reflection, where the past lingers in every corridor.



©Priyadarshini, 2025.
Narayanhiti Palace, Kathmandu.

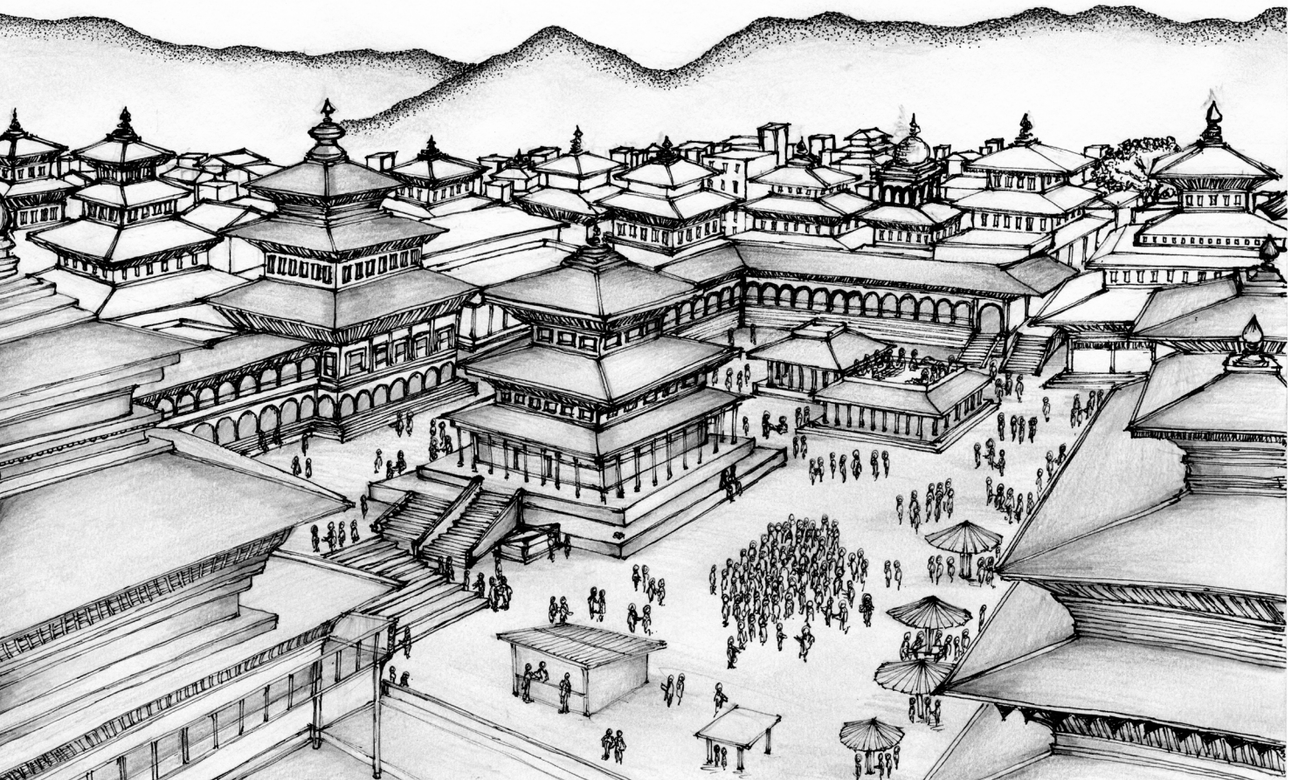
Kathmandu Durbar Square

1.MAKHAN BAHIL
2.TARINI DEVI TEMPLE
3.KALIKA TEMPLE
4.MAHENDRSHWOR MAHA EV TEMPLE
5.PANCHA MUKHI LAKSHMI NARAYAN TEMPLE
6.MAHADEV TEMPLE
7.KAGESHWAR TEMPLE
8.MAHADEV TEMPLE
9.TALEJU BHAWANI TEMPLE
10. BUDHANILKANTHA NAR AN IMAGE
11.MAHADEV TEMPLE
12. DASAIN GHAR TEMPLE
13. MUL CHOK
14. NASAL CHOK
15.BASANTAPUR BHAWAN
16. LALITPUR BHAWAN
17.LOHAN CHOK
18. MOHAN CHOK
19. SUNDARI CHOK
20. JAGANNATH TEMPLE
21. CHASIN DEGA TEMPLE
22. MAJU DEGA TEMPLE
23. SIKHAMU BAHAL
24. KUMARI BAHAL
25. MAHADEV CHAITYA



©Yakshith, 2025.
Site plan of Kathmandu Durbar Square.
Source: Adapted from https://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/103368

Kathmandu Durbar Square features traditional Newar architecture with tiered pagoda-style roofs and intricate wooden carvings, reflecting the cultural richness of the Malla period. Its layout centers around an open courtyard for gatherings, surrounded by elevated temples and palaces of religious and royal importance. The mountainous backdrop underscores its setting in the Kathmandu Valley.



(Left) ©Samruddhi K, 2025.
Arial View, Kathmandu Durbar Square.

Kumari Ghar

The Kumari Ghar, a sacred home in Katmandu, overlooks the land and it's people, almost as if it is blessing them.
Residing in this residential shrine, lies a living, breathing goddess; the Kumari: a girl that is appointed by the people to bless and reveal herself to the ones come to seek her blessings.
This divine home, with its intricate doors, windows and balconies that whispers traditional Nepali architecture through its timber grains, is a significant cultural and religious landmark for Nepal.

(Right) ©Gaurav, 2025.
Kumari Ghar, Kathmandu.

Gaddhi Baithak

Located in Kathmandu Durbar Square, the Gaddhi Baithak is a prime example of neoclassical design, featuring grand Corinthian columns, arched windows, and intricate cornices that reflect Colonial influence during the Rana era. It stands out starkly against its immediate surrounding context of traditional Newari temples.

Built in 1908, the Gaddi Baithak was originally part of the royal palace throne room.

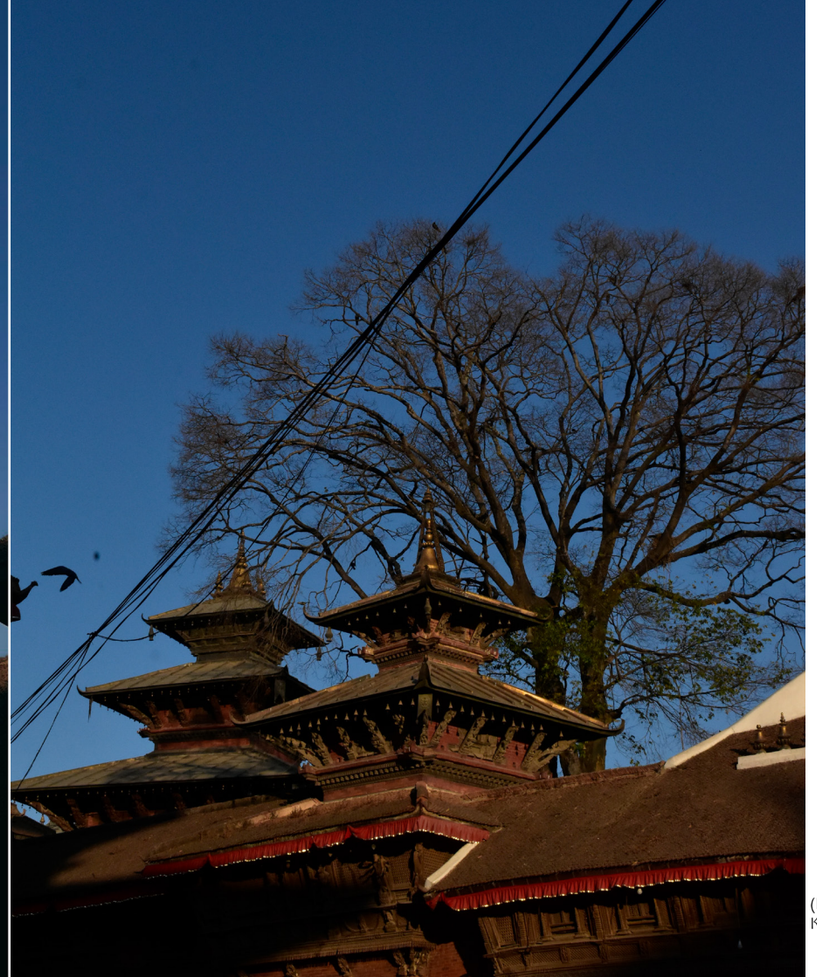
The play of light and shadow on its pristine white facade further enhances its monumental elegance and stately presence.

)Gaurav, 2025.
addi Baihak, Kathmandu Durbar Square.

Kaal Bhairav Temple

The Kaal Bhairav shrine in Kathmandu Durbar Square is a striking example of traditional Newar architecture and Hindu iconography. The fierce stone sculpture of Bhairav, adorned with vivid colors and offerings, is framed by intricately carved timber and stone temples with tiered pagoda roofs and red canopies that reflect the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of the Kathmandu Valley. The surrounding crowd emphasizes its role as a living religious site deeply embedded in local traditions.

©Gaurav, 2025.
Kaal Bhairav Temple, Kathmandu Durbar Square.



The traditional Newar pagoda-style temples of Kathmandu Durbar Square, known for their intricate tiered roofs and exquisite woodwork. The temples are constructed using timber framing and brick masonry, with extended eaves supported by beautifully carved wooden struts. This architectural style reflects a harmonious blend of artistry and seismic resilience developed over centuries in the Kathmandu Valley.

(Left)©Gaurav, 2025.
Kathmandu Durbar Square.

(Right)©Shefalica, 2025.
Kathmandu Durbar Square.

©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Mul Chowk, Patan Durbar Square.

©Vaishnavi Venkatesh J., 2025.
Kathmandu.

Hand-pulled cycle carts

Hand-pulled cycle carts, or rickshaws, are an integral part of Thamel's charm and functionality. Perfectly suited to the area's narrow, bustling streets, they offer a convenient and efficient way to navigate the district-especially where motor vehicles struggle to operate.

Beyond practicality, these carts contribute to the cultural identity of Thamel. Their colorful designs and slow, steady movement reflect the relaxed rhythm of local life, offering a more immersive travel experience.

For short distances, rickshaws remain one of the best ways to travel in Thamel-blending tradition, sustainability, and human connection in a way that few other forms of transport can.

The warm hues of sunset falling over the traditional skyline of Bhaktapur, where tiered roofs with ornate timber struts and brick facades dominate the urban landscape. The architecture reflects the widely observed Newar style, with narrow buildings, carved windows, and clay tile roofing blending harmoniously with the surrounding hills. Rooftop terraces and signs of daily life add a contemporary layer to the city's historic charm.

©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Bhaktapur Durbar Square.

04 A Walk-Through Time

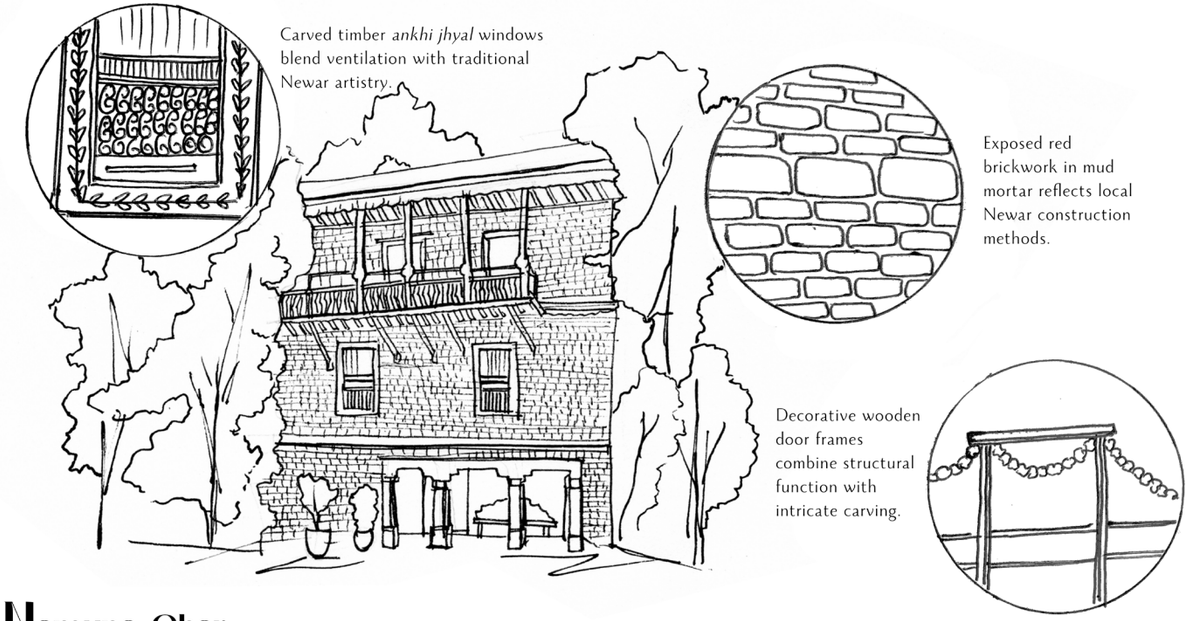
Bhaktapur transported us to a bygone era with its impeccably preserved heritage. Walking through its timeless alleys, we met Mr. Ravindra Puri; a Conservationist who has been instrumental in conserving this historic treasure.

©Monisha K, 2025.
Street of Bhaktapur.

Mr. Rabindra Puri

Rabindra Puri is a Nepalese Conservationist known for restoring traditional Newar buildings using reclaimed brick, carved timber, and traditional methods. His projects in Bhaktapur gained international recognition for combining craftsmanship with earthquake-resistant design. Puri's work preserves historical authenticity while adapting structures for modern use.

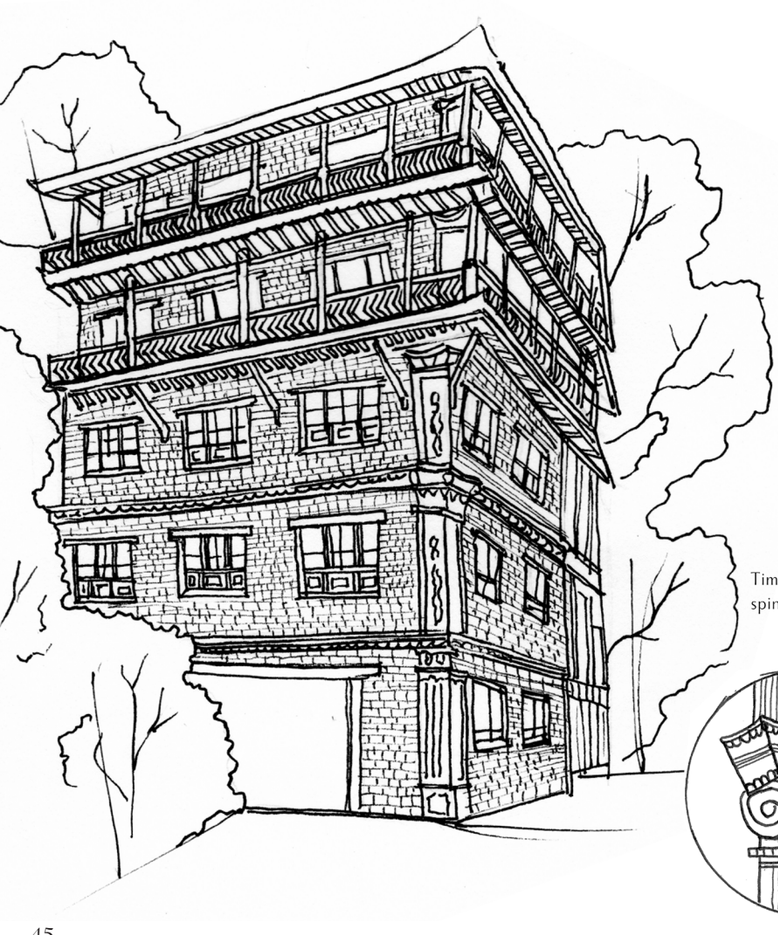
©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Basuki Ghar, Bhaktapur.


Carved timber *ankhi jhyal* windows blend ventilation with traditional Newar artistry.
Exposed red brickwork in mud mortar reflects local Newar construction methods.
Decorative wooden door frames combine structural function with intricate carving.

Namuna Ghar

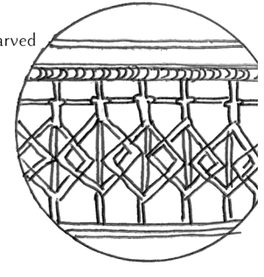
One of the excellent examples of adaptive reuse Nepal shows us is the Namuna Ghar by Mr. Rabindra Puri. Instead of the heavy dependence on concrete and steel, Mr.Puri used bricks, timber and mud; sustainable materials that have been used since the dawn of civilization.
Once home to a humble farmer who raised chicken, Mr.Puri has tastefully blended the residence with modern conveniences for the world to see. It is an ode to the past.
His work on this building has also received an award from the UNESCO for heritage conservation.

©Sana Suresh, 2025.
Namuna Ghar, Bhakthapur.



Toni Hagen

The Toni Hagen house in Bhaktapur, Nepa is a building dedicated to Dr. Toni Hagen, Swiss geologist and explorer who played a crucial role in introducing Nepal to the outside world through his scientific works and documentary films. Hagen documente the newly constructed concrete house in Bhaktapur, criticizing it's aesthetic decord with it's traditional surroundings. This original concrete structure, was later renovated by Mr. Rabindra Puri to reflect the architectural heritage of Nepal.



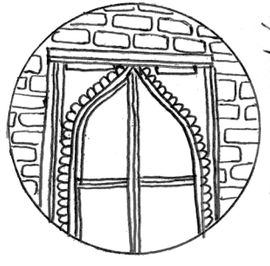
Timber balustrades with carved spindles in Newar style.

Load-bearing brick piers with subt malla-era motifs.

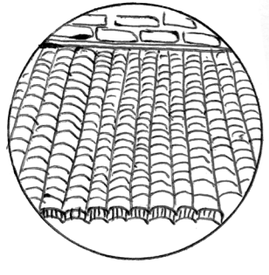
©Sana Suresh, 2025.
Toni Hagen House, Bhakthapur.

Manju Baha

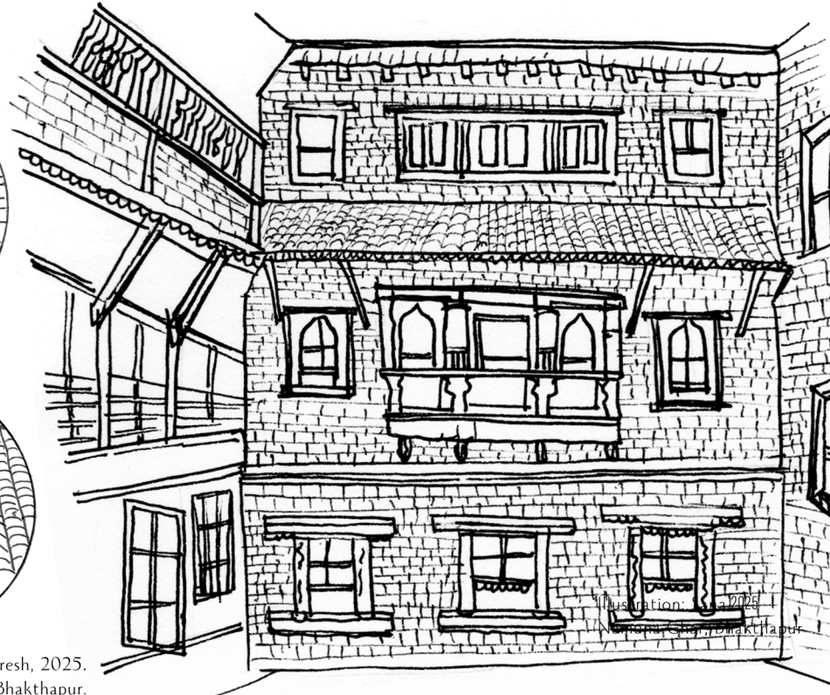
Manju baha hotel in Nepal is a testament to the beauty of adaptive reuse, where a 19th century traditional Nepali house has been restored into a charming boutique hotel. Stepping inside, we are enveloped in warm atmosphere that honors Nepal's rich culture heritage, with intricate wooden carvings, brickwork and local art display. By preserving the past while embracing sustainability, Manju Baha hotel offers a blend of heritage and cuisine to ones that seek such an experience.



Segmental arched timber door set in a brick masonry frame.



Double-pitched roof with overlapping clay tiles and extended eaves.



©Sana Suresh, 2025.
Manju Baha, Bhakthapur.

These intricately carved timber columns from Bhaktapur exemplify the refined craftsmanship of traditional architecture observed in the place. Each shaft features a rhythmic layering of decorative mouldings, including motifs such as lotus petals, bead-and-reel bands, and stepped plinths. The capitals transition into geometric blocks that support the beam structure above, creating a harmonious interplay between structural integrity and ornamental richness. The use of hardwood such as Sal wood or Haldu and precise joinery ensures both durability and elegance, making these columns essential elemen in the architectural vocabulary of historic Nepali courtyards and temples.

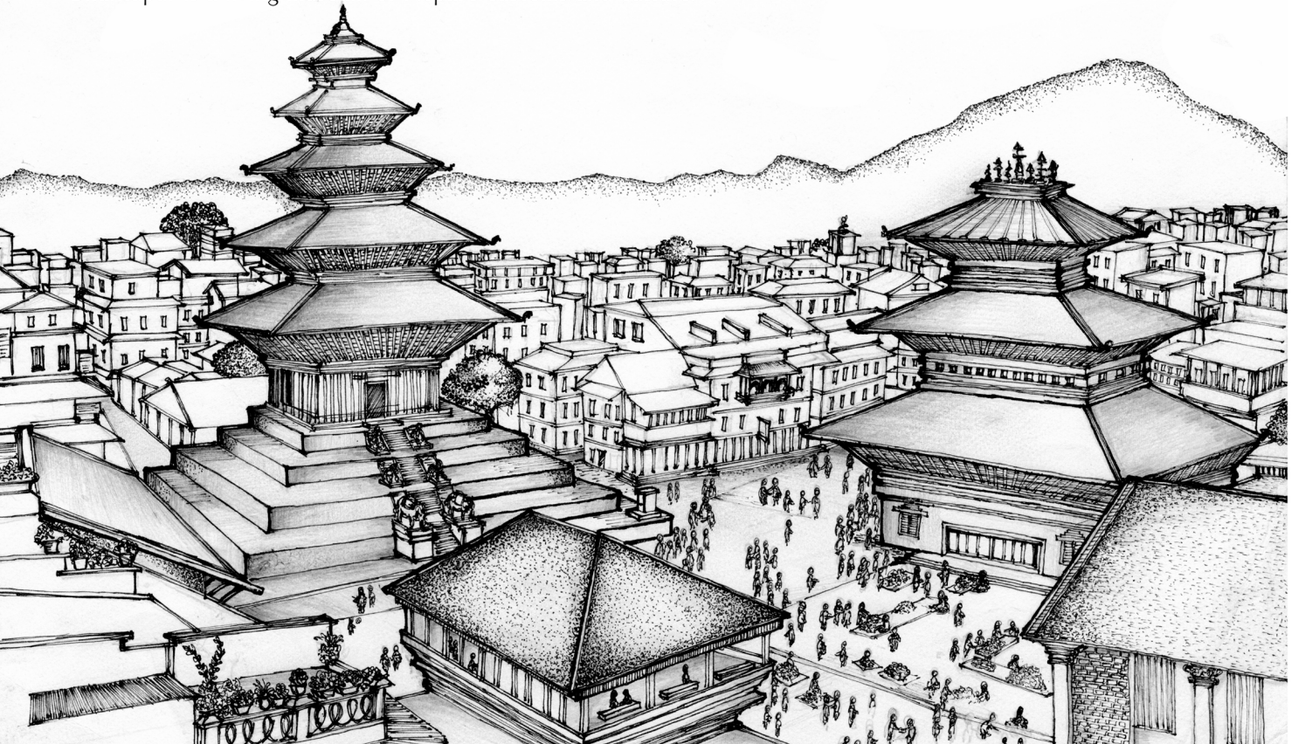
©Shefalica, 2025.
Manju Baha, Bhakthapur.

A traditional Newar woodworker crafting architectural elements in a workshop in Bhaktapur. Surrounded by intricately carved wooden components, such as window frames and latticework, the artisan is engaged in shaping raw timber, likely Sal wood, into ornamental or structural pieces typical of Newar architecture. The dimly lit space, illuminated by a shaft of natural light, emphasizes the quiet reverence and precision behind the centuries-old craft of woodcarving that defines the built heritage of the Kathmandu Valley.

©Sana Suresh, 2025.
Carpentry shop, Bhakthapur.

Bhaktapur Durbar Square

Bhaktapur is a place where time stands still, with its ancient temples, winding brick streets, and soulful art of pottery and woodcarving. The soaring Nyatapola Temple and the bustling Bhaktapur Durbar Square showcase history alive in every part of its heart. With its festivals that explode with color, and timeless, hospitable charm, Bhaktapur is a living museum of Nepal's customs and culture.



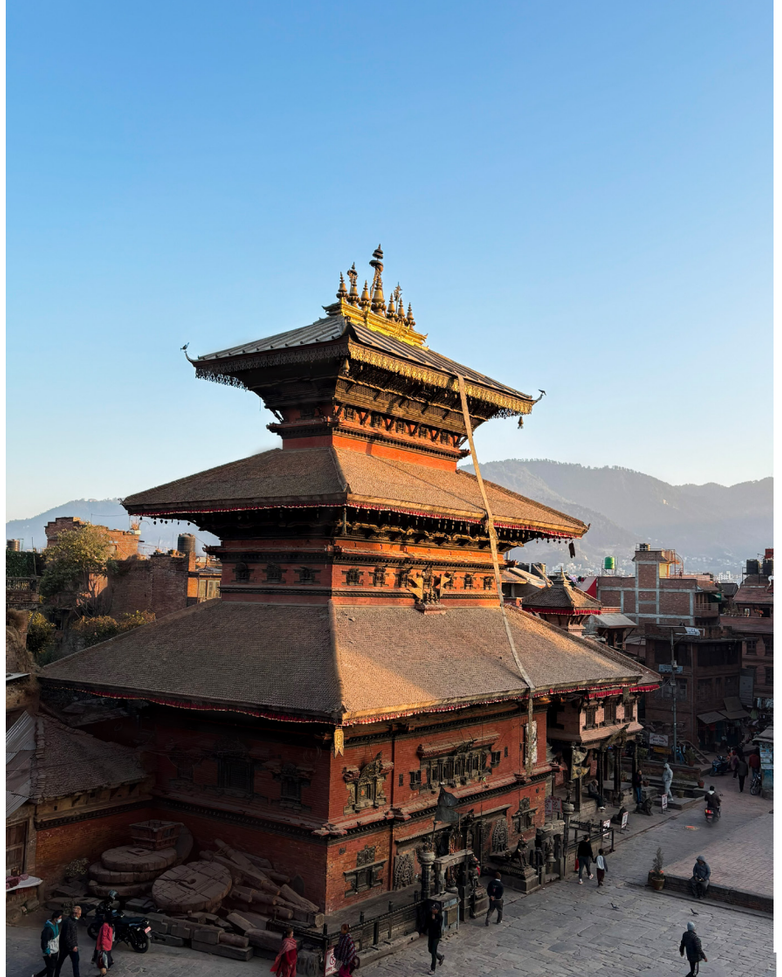
A Buddhist courtyard with stone chaityas (stupas) in Kwabahal (Golden Temple area), Patan, — a region known for its dense concentration of Newar Buddhist architecture. The chaityas exhibit classic Vajrayana Buddhist iconography, with finely carved stone bases, lotus motifs, and seated Buddhas in meditative postures facing four cardinal directions. Surrounding traditional brick buildings with timber balconies reflect typical Newar urban design, harmoniously integrating religious monuments within the daily fabric of residential life.

(Left) ©Samruddhi K, 2025.
Arial View, Bhaktapur Durbar Square.

(Right) ©Gaurav, 2025
Bhaktapur Durbar Square

Dattatreya Temple

The Dattatreya Temple located in Bhaktapur, Nepal, is a prominent example of traditional Newar pagoda-style architecture. The temple features a tiered roof structure with intricately carved wooden struts (*tunas*), brick walls adorned with detailed lattice windows, and a richly decorated entrance flanked by guardian statues. Its harmonious proportions, use of terracotta and timber, and integration of religious iconography reflect the fusion of spiritual symbolism and sophisticated craftsmanship characteristic of Malla-period architecture in the Kathmandu Valley.



©Nafeesa Areeba, 2025.
Dattatreya temple, Bhaktapur.

The corbelled pathway reflects Bhaktapur's dense urban morphology, shaped by vernacular techniques and the availability of local materials. Brick masonry and exposed timber elements indicate a climate-responsive construction approach. Weathering patterns across the facades reveal prolonged exposure to monsoonal conditions.

©Nafeesa Areeba, 2025.
Views of Bhakthapur Street.

Bhaktapur Durbar Square features striking Shikhara-style temples with tall, curvilinear spires made of intricately carved sand-stone and brick, showcasing advanced Malla-period masonry and strong Indian influences. Although many of these historic structures were damaged in the 2015 Gorkha earthquake, restoration efforts using traditional materials and techniques have been vital in preserving their architectural heritage and bringing the square back to life.

©Tanisha Haneef, 2025.
Bhakthapur Durbar Square.

A narrow street in Bhaktapur lined with traditional Newar houses, this sketch captures the characteristic sloped tiled roofs, intricately carved wooden windows, and overhanging eaves designed to shield from monsoon rains. Built with brick masonry and timber framing, these buildings reflect the medieval Malla-era urban fabric that still defines Bhaktapur's historic core.

©Nafeesa Areeba, 2025.
View of Bhakthapur Street.

The frame highlights the region's exceptional Malla-period architecture, showcasing traditional brick masonry, intricately carved wood, and stone otla-hallmarks of Newar craftsmanship. The Shikhara-style temple and ornate timber facades reflect both durability and artistic expression, set within a dense, organically planned urban fabric of courtyards and temples. Today, this heritage-rich setting continues to function as a vibrant living city, blending daily life, religious practice, and cultural tourism.

©V.K.Vikhyath, 202
Bhaktapur stree

The Krishna Mandir in Patan Durbar Square is a masterpiece of Shikhara-style temple architecture built in the 17th century during the reign of King Siddhi Narsingh Malla. Constructed from finely carved stone, the temple stands on a raised platform and features ornate columns, symmetrical staircases flanked by guardian animals (horses, lions, and mythical creatures), and intricate relief panels narrating episodes from Hindu epics. The presence of a young girl participating in a Bel Bibaha ceremony reflects the enduring cultural traditions, with her elaborate red and gold attire symbolizing purity and divine union.

(Left)©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Bhaktapur Darbar Square.

(Right)©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Bhaktapur Darbar Square.

The frame showcases traditional vernacular architecture, with intricately carved wooden doors framed by red brick masonry, reflecting the rich craftsmanship of the Kathmandu Valley. The woman sits on a raised platform called "otla", a common urban element in hill settlements that offers space for rest, trade, and interaction. These platforms, often placed at thresholds or along paths, support communal life and spontaneous encounters. They exemplify how design in these settings democratizes public space without barriers or gatekeeping.

©Shefalica, 2025.
Bhaktapur Darbar Square.

An elderly man seated beside a vendor stall selling prayer beads and jewelry. The scene reflects the vernacular urban fabric of Tibetan-influenced Kathmandu, with narrow stone-paved alleys, colourful hand-crafted items on display, and the use of raised plinths known as otla in front of traditional shopfronts, encouraging informal commerce and social interaction in a spiritually vibrant setting.

©Nuthan Sadath, 2025.
Bhaktapur Darbar Square.

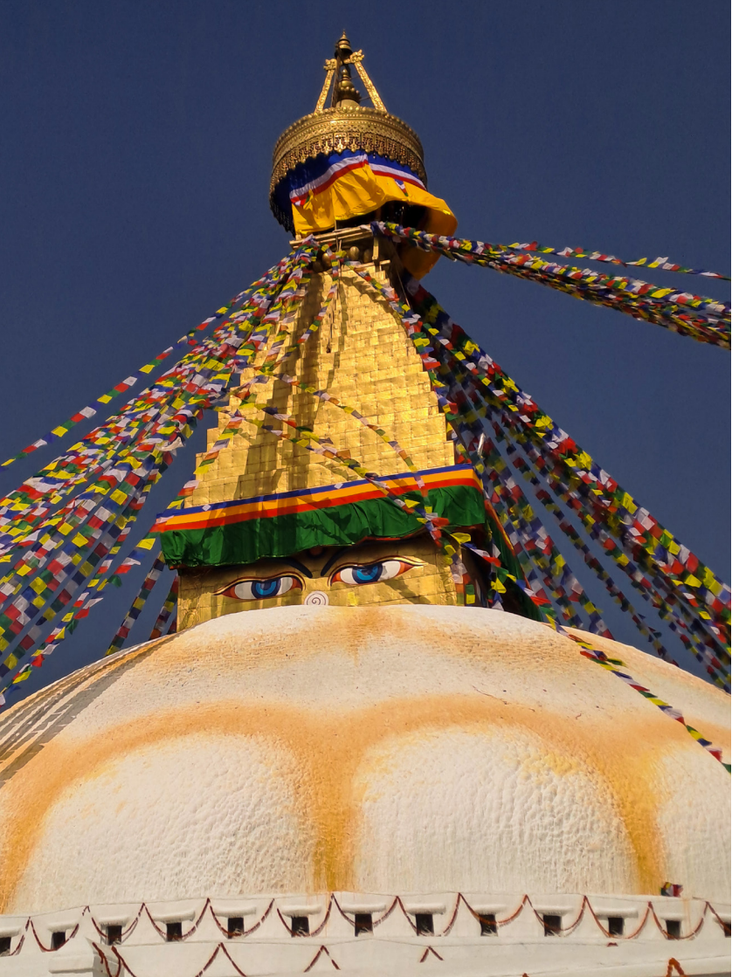
A serene moment of devotion at Boudhanath Stupa, where an elderly man is offering prayer before a shrine. The architectural details include intricate woodwork painted in vibrant hues and a dome embellished with ornamental jewels, bells, and symbolic patterns. The stupa's form reflects classic Tibetan Buddhist architecture, emphasizing symmetry, spirituality, and cosmic symbolism. Colorful prayer flags draped across the space add dynamic movement and spiritual energy to the sacred atmosphere.

©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Boudhanath Stupa, Kathmandu.

05 Sacred and Cultural Marvels

From the iconic Buddha Eyes of Boudhanath Stupa to the soul-stirring Bagmati riverside Aarti at Pashupatinath Temple, and finally, the artistic archives of Taragaon Museum, the day is a journey through spirituality and history.

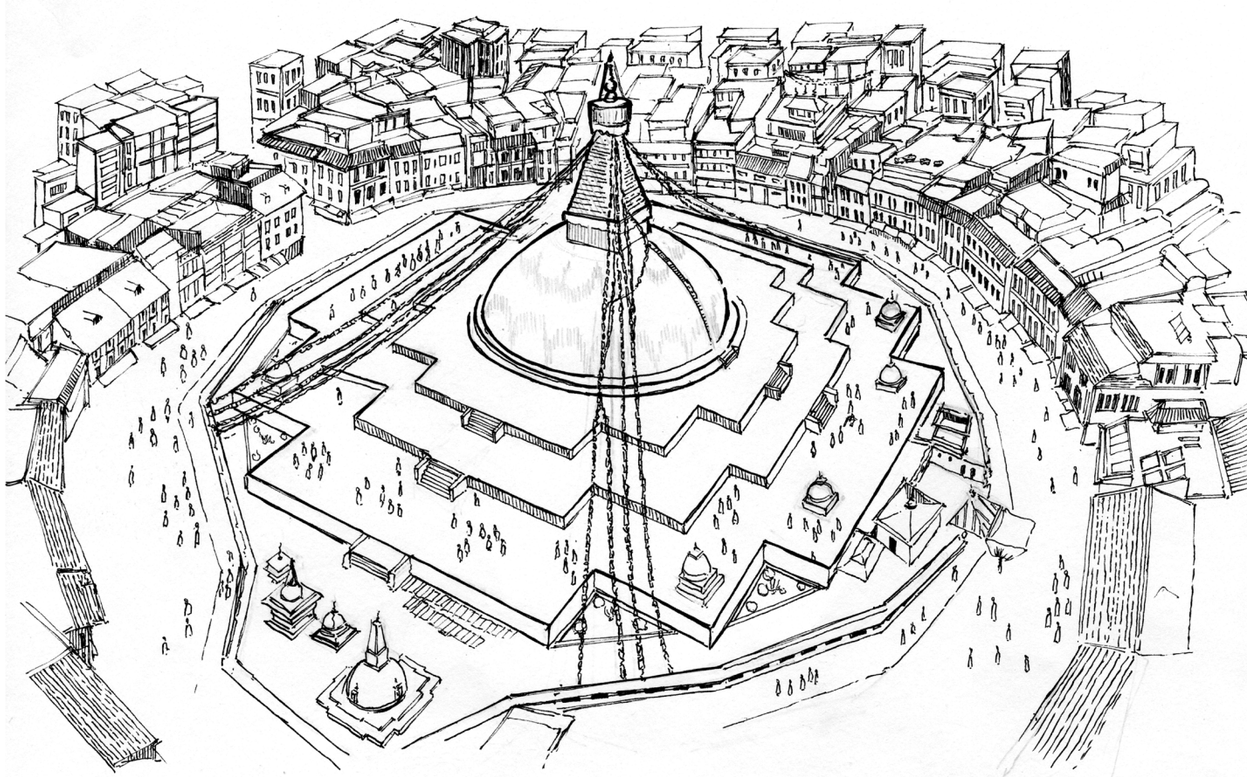
©Sana Suresh, 2025.
Boudhanath Stupa, Kathmandu.



Boudhnath Stupa

The Boudhanath Stupa is one of the largest and most significant stupas in Nepal and has been enlisted into the UNESCO list of World Heritage Site. Architecturally, it features a massive whitewashed dome symbolizing the earth, topped by a gilded harmika (square tower) with the all-seeing eyes of the Buddha gazing in four directions. Above this rise the 13 steps of enlightenment, leading to the umbrella pinnacle, while colorful prayer flags radiate outward, representing the five elements and spreading spiritual blessings.

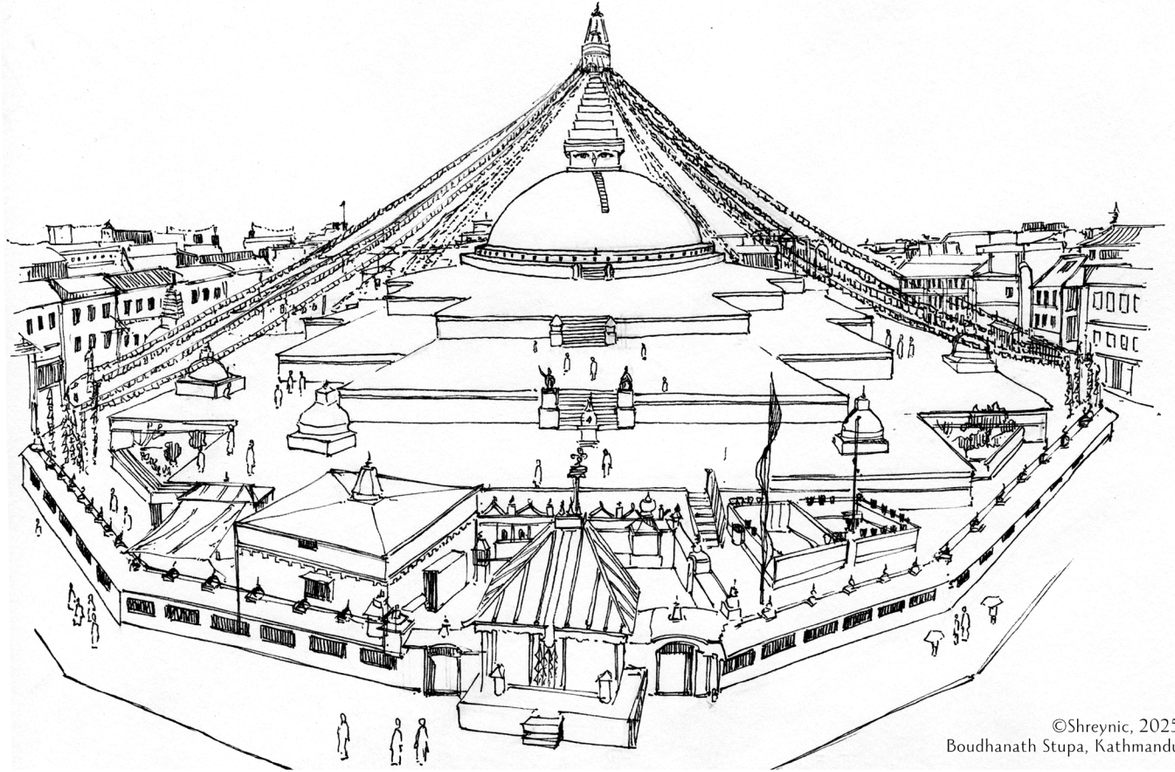
©Tanisha Haneef, 2025.
Swayambhunath Stupa, Kathmandu.



The Boudhanath Stupa in Kathmandu serves as a monumental spiritual and visual anchor within the city. Its massive stepped base and central dome contrast with the smaller surrounding buildings, emphasizing its religious and civic significance. Radiating roads and pathways converge toward it, reflecting how sacred architecture influences urban form and movement.

©Shreynic, 2025.
Boudhanath Stupa, Kathmandu.

This sketch highlights the monumental scale and spiritual presence of Boudhanath Stupa. A pyramidal gateway leads to a platform, from which three large stepped terraces rise to a hemispherical dome-an ancient Buddhist form symbolizing the cosmos. Constructed primarily from brick and finished with lime, the stupa is crowned with a spire and parasol, with Buddha's all-seeing eyes painted on the harmika. These features, along with the layered roof structure, create an awe-inspiring visual and spiritual experience.



©Shreynic, 2025.
Boudhanath Stupa, Kathmandu.

A pigeon peacefully perched on a yellow timber finial of a stupa within the Boudhanath Stupa complex. The small architectural element features traditional tiered mouldings weathered with age. In the background, a tiled roof and oral wall painting typical of Himalayan Buddhist architecture can be seen, adding cultural richness to the scene.

©Shefalica, 2025.
Swayambhunath Stupa, Kathmandu.

Taragaon Museum

Nestled in the very heart of Kathmandu, the Taragaon Museum is a poetic fusion of European modernist design with Nepalese vernacular. Inspired in the 1970s by Austrian architect Carl Pruscha, it transforms a former hostel into a vil cultural archive honoring Nepal's architectural legacy. The elegant arched entrances and the raw texture of the bricl work are accentuated by the filtered light, inspiring a calm respectful scene.

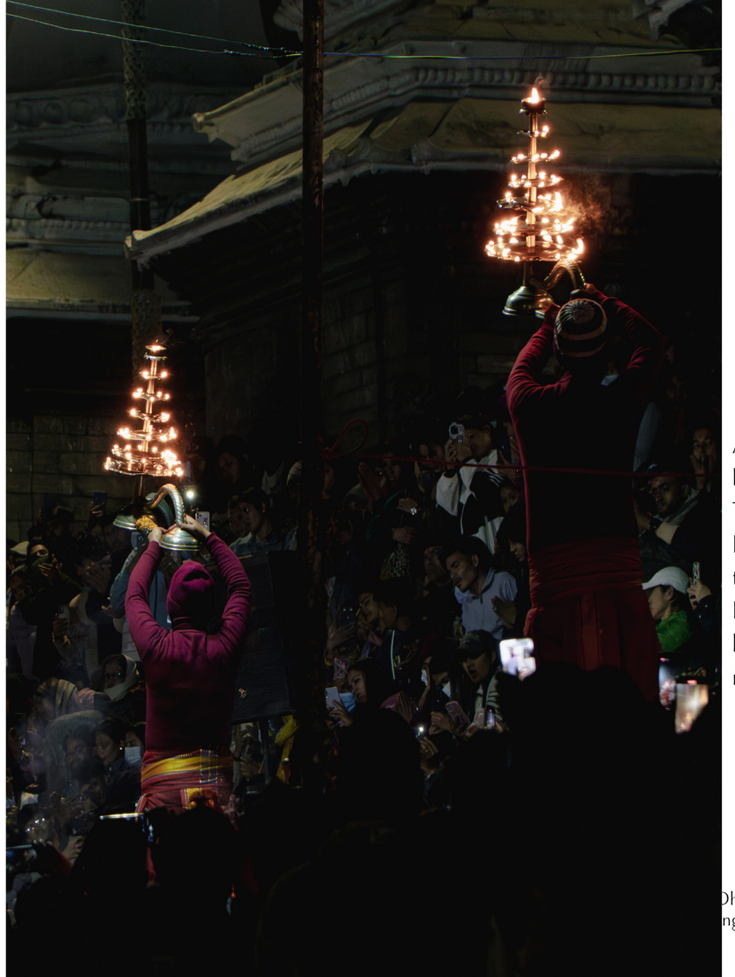
©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Taragaon Museum, Kathmandu.

The museum's architecture reflects a fusion of cubist forms and regional brutalism, articulated through exposed red brick. Cylindrical and rectilinear volumes interlock to create a sculptural yet grounded composition. Openings are strategically placed to emphasize form and depth, while the material palette speaks to structural honesty and climatic responsiveness.

©Shefalica, 2025.
Taragaon Museum, Kathmandu.

Designed by Carl Pruscha in the 1970s, Taragaon Next reasserts brick as both structure and surface. Its vaulted volumes and exposed masonry reinterpret Nepal's vernacular language within a modernist framework-demonstrating how local materials can anchor contemporary architecture in cultural continuity.

©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Taragaon Museum, Kathmandu.



Pashupatinath
Temple - The Aarti

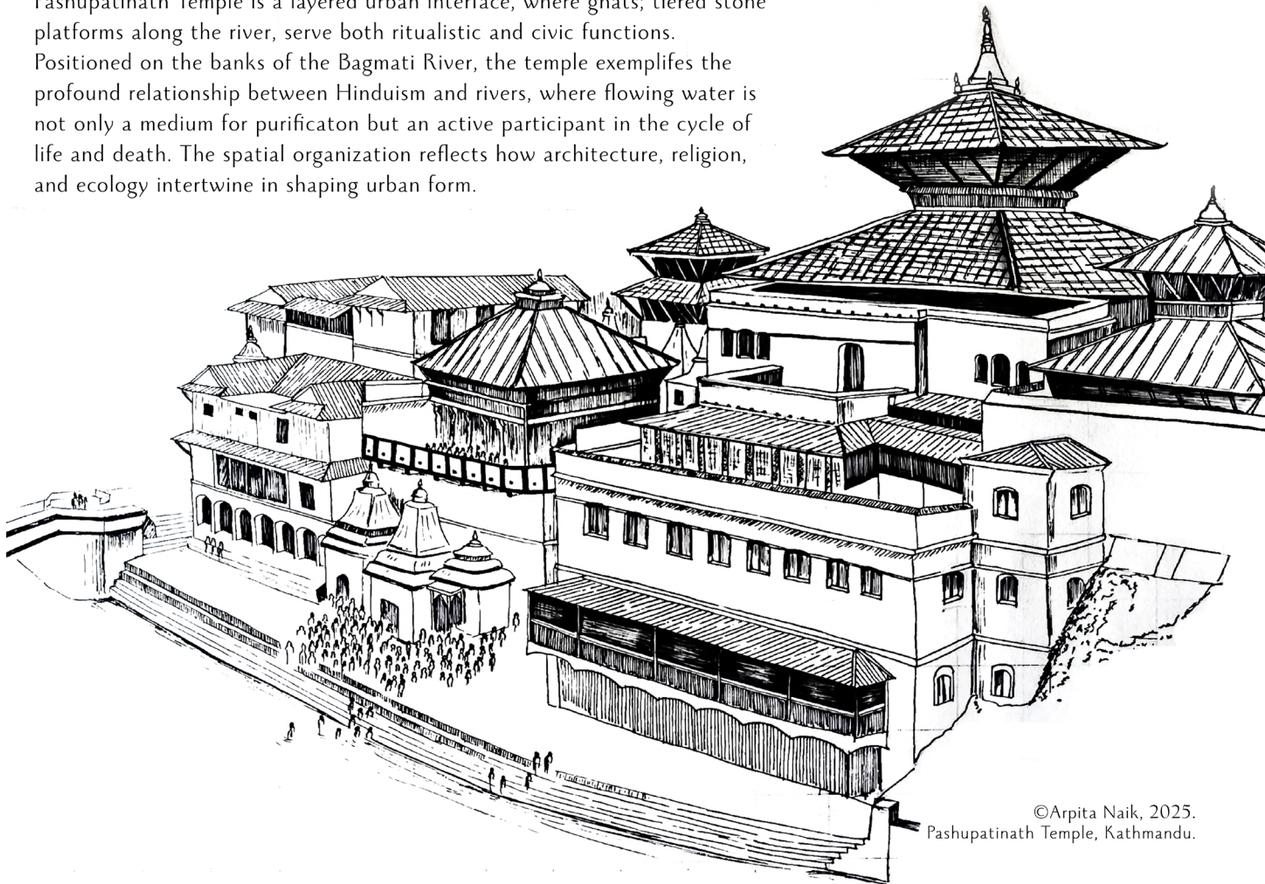
Aarti, is a vibrant ceremony, accompanied by the sound of bells, drums, and cymbals. The aarti takes place at the banks of Bagmati River at sunset which is opposite the Pashupatinath temple.
It is performed by priests who will offer lighted lamps and chant mantras in a highly ritualized manner.

Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
nga Aarti, Pashupatinath Temple.

The frame captures the traditional cremation ghats at the Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu, Nepal, set along the banks of the Bagmati River. The architecture features a blend of Newar-style elements, with tiered pagoda-like pavilions sheltering the cremation platforms and arched colonnades lining the temple complex, exuding a somber yet sacred atmosphere. The smoke rising from the funeral pyres adds to the spiritual solemnity of this UNESCO World Heritage Site.

©Nuthan Sadath, 2025.
Pashupatinath Temple, Kathmandu.

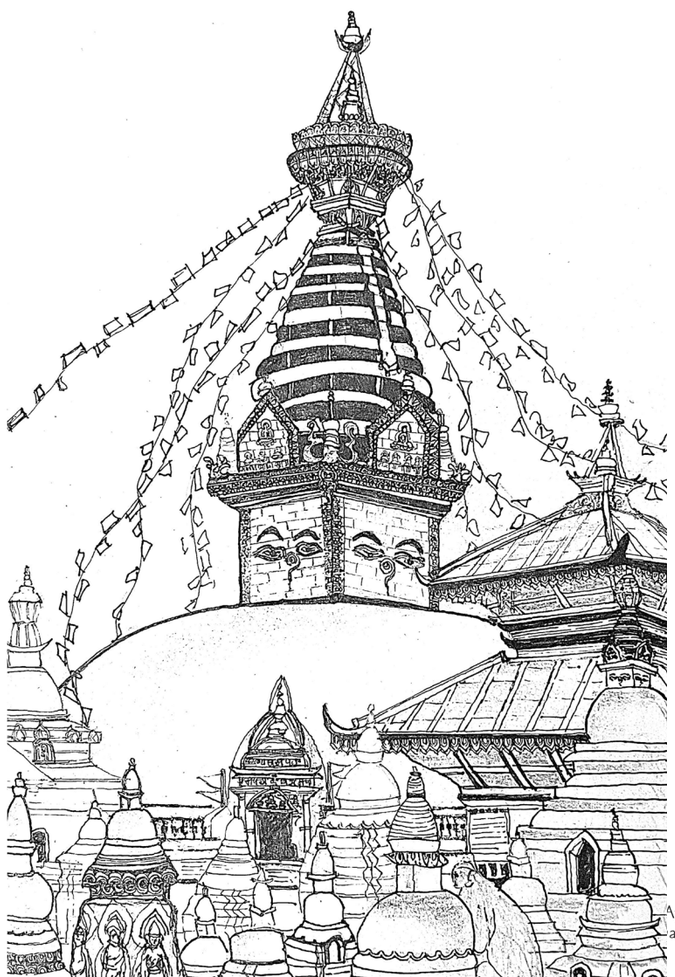
Pashupatinath Temple is a layered urban interface, where ghats; tiered stone platforms along the river, serve both ritualistic and civic functions. Positioned on the banks of the Bagmati River, the temple exemplifes the profound relationship between Hinduism and rivers, where flowing water is not only a medium for purificaton but an active participant in the cycle of life and death. The spatial organization reflects how architecture, religion, and ecology intertwine in shaping urban form.



©Arpita Naik, 2025.
Pashupatinath Temple, Kathmandu.

Swayambhunath, also known as the Monkey Temple due to the large population of monkeys on site, is constructed primarily from stone and brick with gilded copper detailing. Its elevated plinths and tiered forms not only support Buddhist ritual practices but also provide spatial niches frequently occupied by monkeys, reflecting a long-standing coexistence between built form and local fauna.

©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Swayambhunath Stupa, Kathmandu.



©Ayishath Fahna Thasneen, 2025.
Swayambhu Mahachaitya, Kathmandu.

06 Mystics, Mountains and Monkeys

A Day of adventure began at Swayambhunath, the "Monkey Temple," followed by a breathtaking ascent to Chandragiri Hill, dedicated to Lord Shiva, offering panoramic views.

Swayambhunath Stupa

Climbing the 365 stone steps to Swayambhunath Stupa, known as the "Monkey Temple", we were greeted by the soft golden light of the morning sky and the sounds of chanting and flapping prayer flags. Monkeys dashed along the way, adding to the serene atmosphere. The smaller shrines at the foot of the stupa create a spatial hierarchy, offering intimate ritual spaces and reinforcing the central stupa's significance as the focal point of worship, inviting reflection and connection with the history and spirituality of the site.

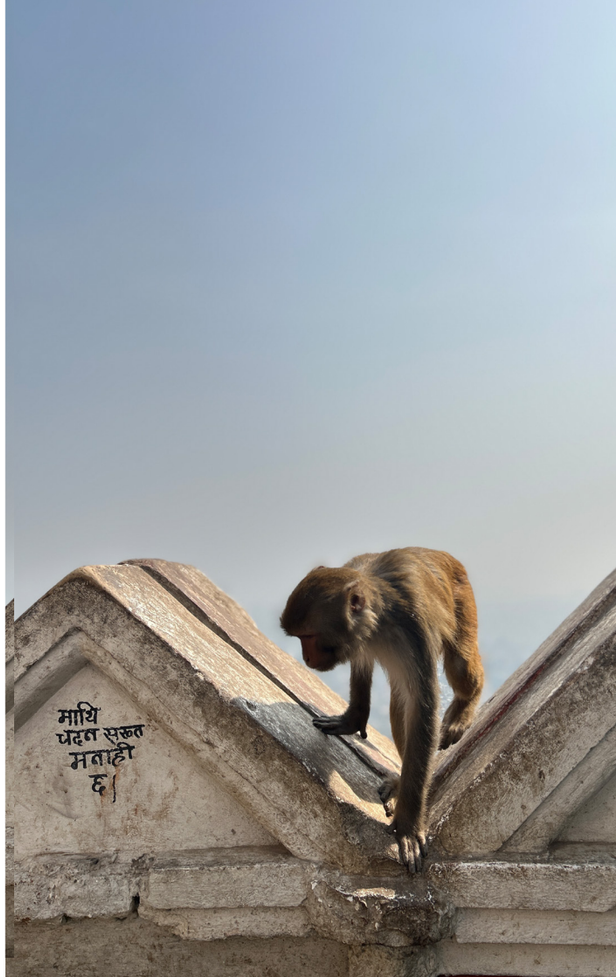
©V.K.Vikhyath, 2025.
Swayambhunath Stupa, Kathmandu.

Swayambhunath Stupa, located atop a hill, is a harmonious fusion of stupa (Buddhist mound-like structure) and pagoda style, with the large hemispherical dome symbolizing the earth, and the gilded spire above it representing the 13 stages of spiritual enlightenment. The all-seeing Buddha eyes painted on the square base of the spire convey omniscient wisdom.

©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Swayambhunath Stupa, Kathmandu.

At Swayambhunath Temple, monkeys are integral to the cultural landscape, seamlessly blending with its sacred architecture and rituals.

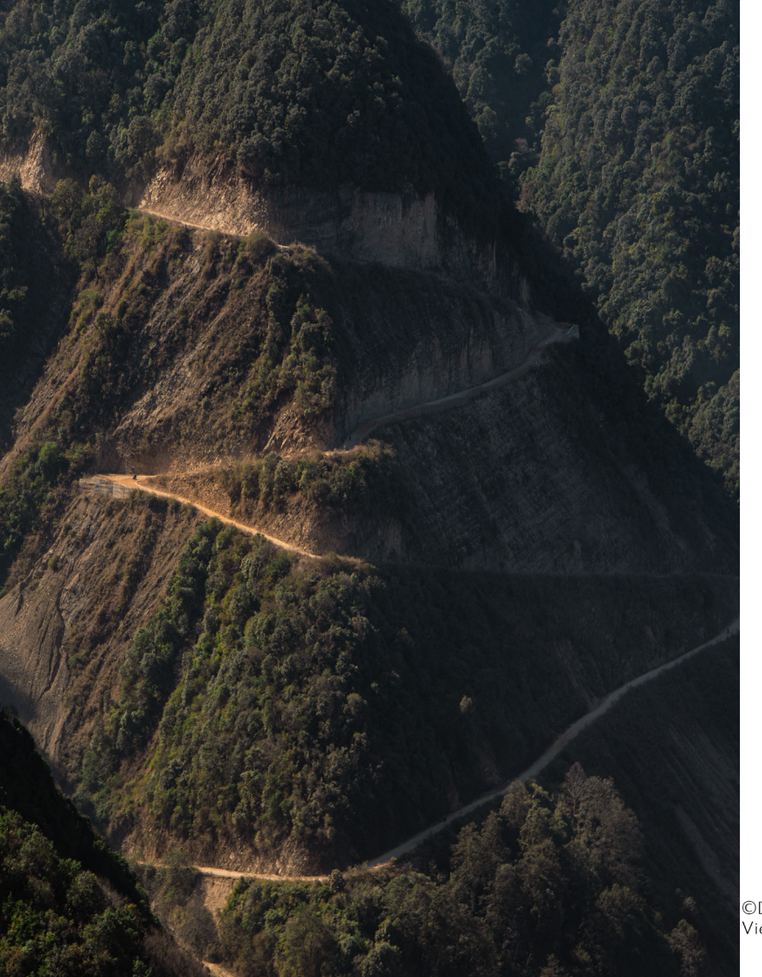
Here, monkeys are respected and allowed to roam freely across stupas, shrines, and pathways. Their presence adds a dynamic, living element to the otherwise still and symmetrical setting, turning the temple into a vibrant spiritual ecosystem. They occupy both natural and built spaces—trees, terraces, and stairways—reflecting a harmony between wildlife and worship. These monkeys have become part of the temple's identity, contributing to a unique cultural-scape where architecture, mythology, and ecology merge in a spiritually charged environment.



©Gaurav, 2025.
Swayambhunath Stupa, Kathmandu.

Lighting butter lamps at Swayambhunath is a key ritual, symbolizing the dispelling of darkness and ignorance, and the offering of light to the Buddha. This practice, rooted in Tibetan Buddhist tradition, is believed to invite blessings.

©V.K.Vikhyath, 2025.
Swayambhunath Stupa, Kathmandu.



Chandragiri Hills

Chandragiri Hills, positioned along the southwestern rim of Kathmandu, offers unobstructed views of the valley below and the Himalayan peaks beyond. The ascent by cable car reveals shifting terrain-dense forests, terraced slopes, and distant snowlines.

©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
View from Chandragiri Hills, Kathmandu

hed at 2,551 meters, Chandragiri Hills doubles as an adventure hub with high-altitude thrills. Ziplining over fores
cycling, and the glass-floored skywalk offer adrenaline with Himalayan views. Activities like wall climbing, free f
horse riding add variety, while the amusement park brings in playful fun. It's a surprising blend of natural beaut
thrill-packed experience at the summit.

©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
'iew of the Himalayan ranges from Chandragiri Hills.

The cable cars on Chandragiri Hills provide an efficient and scenic mode of transport across the steep terrain, overcoming the challenges posed by the rugged topography. They offer accessibility to hilltop destinations that would otherwise require long, difficult treks, making the area more inclusive and boosting tourism.

At the summit sits the Bhaleshwar Mahadev Temple, a significant pilgrimage site dedicated to Lord Shiva. Built in traditional pagoda style, the temple holds mythological importance, believed to be where King Prithvi Narayan Shah meditated before unifying Nepal. Its elevated placement and axial alignment with the surrounding landscape underscore its spiritual prominence, making it an architectural and cultural anchor atop the hill.

(Left) ©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
View from cable car at Chandragiri Hills, Kathmandu.

(Right) ©Monisha K, 2025.
Chandragiri Hills, Kathmandu.

These habitated hills showcased as urban spaces are thoughtfully shaped by the natural topography through the creation of terraces. These stepped levels not only provide scenic vantage points but also organize circulation and public gathering areas in a challenging hilly landscape. Understanding and working with contours allows for smoother pedestrian movement and enhances accessibility, integrating built form harmoniously with nature.

©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Panoramic View of Chandragiri Hills, Kathmandu.

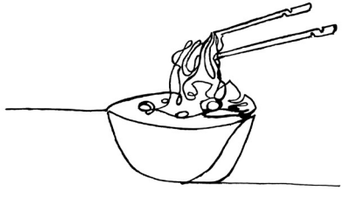
Masks in Nepali culture are deeply rooted in spiritual rituals and festivals, symbolizing deities, demons, and mythological figures in performances like Lakhey and Mahakali Naach - a traditional folk dance. Crafted from timber, clay, or paper mâché and often richly decorated, they reflect Nepal's vibrant artisanal traditions. Their striking forms and cultural depth have earned international recognition in museums and global exhibitions.

Nepali puppetry, a traditional form of storytelling, often depicts mythological tales and social narratives through handcrafted wooden puppets adorned with vibrant costumes and expressive faces. Puppeteering, one of the respected profession is passed down through generations, involving intricate craftsmanship and performance skills. Cultural initiatives and workshops aim to restore and teach puppetry which in turn helps in preserving Nepal's artistic heritage.

(Left) ©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Handcrafted wooden mask.

(Right) ©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Traditional Nepalese wooden puppets.

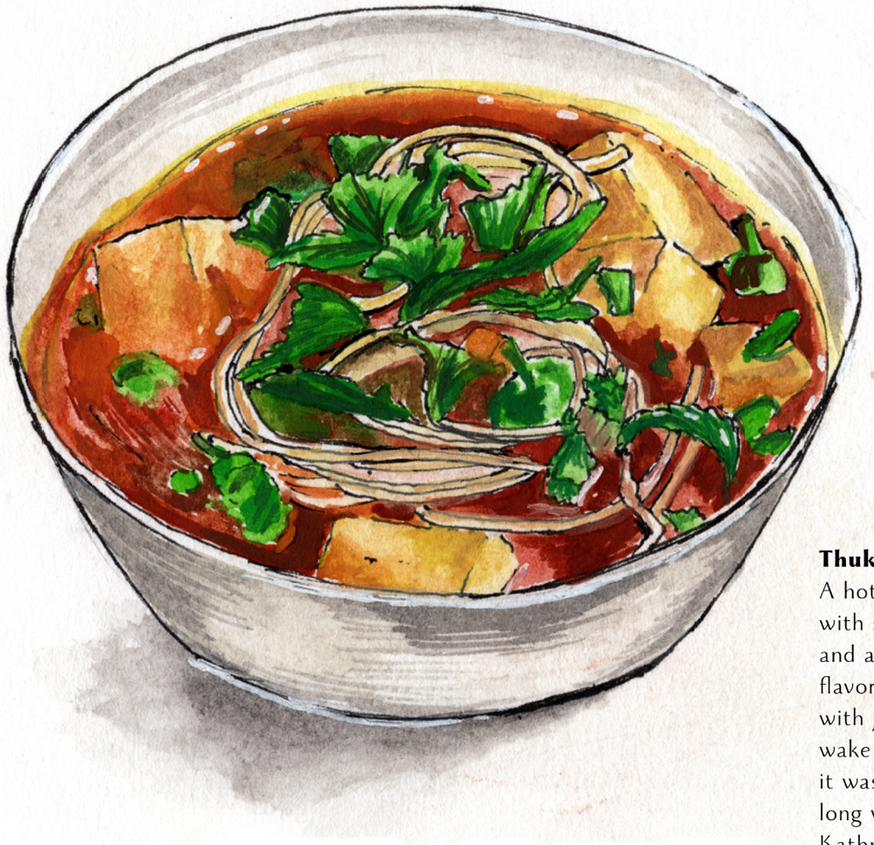
07 Palates of Peaks



Nepal-a land of breathtaking mountains, rich cultural heritage, and, of course, incredible food! Our study tour to Nepal was not just about learning architecture and culture but also about indulging in the country's diverse and delicious cuisine.

The Nepali Thali - A wholesome platter that reflects the country's authentic flavors. It comprises of dal, rice, vegetables, pickles, and a crispy papad. It is a balance of spice, texture, and nutrition, making it a satisfying meal after a long day of exploring.

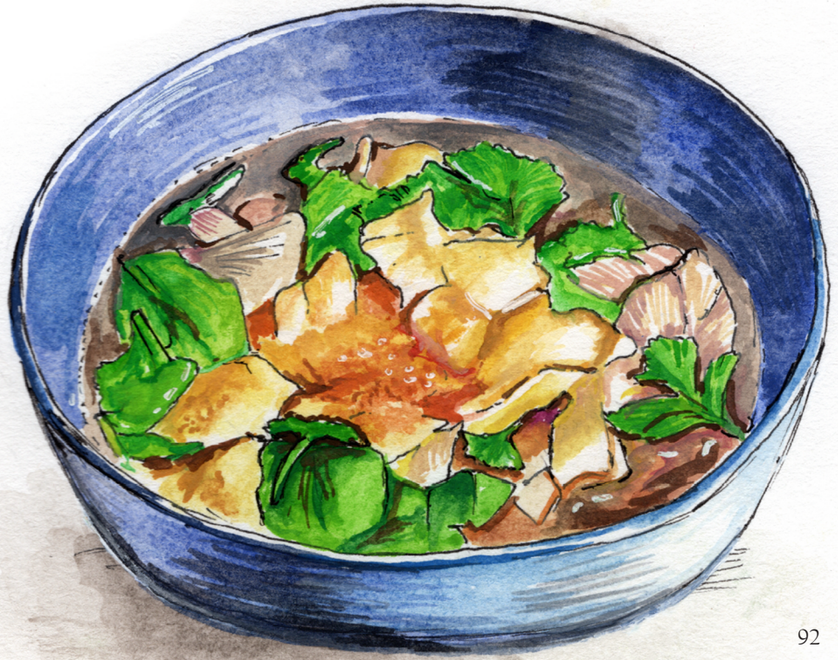
©Sonyel D'Souza, 2025.
Authentic Nepali Thali.



Thukpa:
A hot bowl of Thukpa came packed with springy noodles, colorful veggies, and a jammy egg soaking up all the flavor. The broth was bold and tangy, with just the right amount of spice to wake up the senses. Light yet satisfying, it was the perfect pick-me-up after a long walk through the busy streets of Kathmandu.

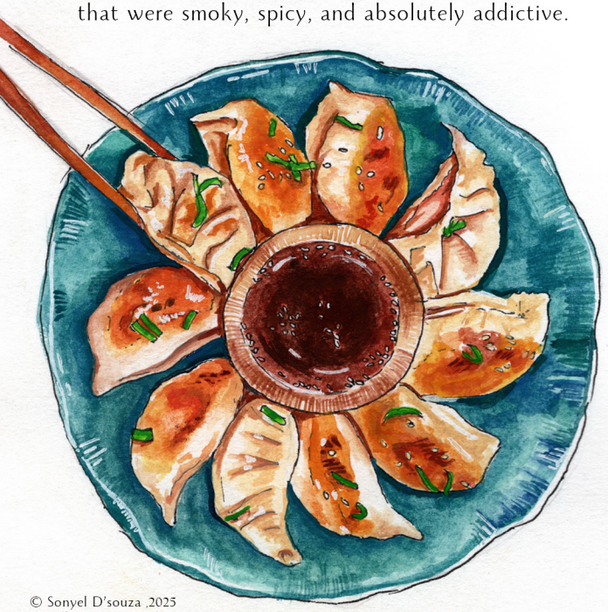
©Sonyel D'Souza, 2025.
Thukpa.

Thenthuk:
Kathmandu's cool evenings called for steaming bowls of noodle soups. Thenthuk offered chewy noodles in a thick, comforting broth, while Thukpa came packed with tangy spices and warmth. Each bowl-whether soupy or stir-fried-celebrated the bold, diverse flavors of the region.

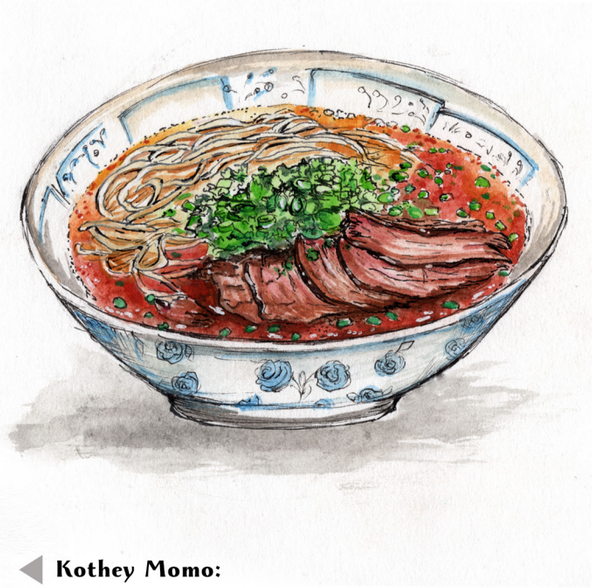


©Sonyel D'Souza, 2025.
Thenthuk.

Noodle Soup:
The broth was deeply flavored, with plump dumplings soaking up the essence of herbs and spices. Another highlight was meat rice—succulent, well-seasoned meat served with fragrant rice. Alongside, we had grilled skewers that were smoky, spicy, and absolutely addictive.



© Sonyel D'souza ,2025
Noodle Soup & Kothe Momos



Kothey Momo:
Golden, pan-fried Kothey Momo arrived crispy on the outside and bursting with savory filling. The spicy dipping sauce added just the right kick to every bite. Paired with a warm bowl of hand pulled Thenthuk, it was the perfect comfort food for a chilly Kathmandu evening.

Culinary Adventure in China Street
As night falls, Lantern Street also known as China Street, lights up with warm glows and the hum of activity. The air is filled with the scent of sizzling skewers, fresh momos, and stir-fried noodles from busy street vendors. Locals and travelers gather under the lanterns, sharing bites and conversation in the lively, music-filled atmosphere. It's a vibrant blend of flavor and culture that defines Thamel's nightlife.

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Thamel Street.

CONTRIBUTORS

Content Writers:
Austin Christopher Carnelio
Haleemah Saniyyah
Lakshmi Raj
Monisha K
Nuthan Sadath
Parthipa M
Pranav Gatty
Priyadarshini
Raghuveer Prabhu
Shefalica
Shreesha H Kumar
Sonyel D'Souza
Vaishnavi Venkatesh Jadhav
Yashas Attavar
Vishwamithra S. Chaithanya

Photo Editors:
Gaurav
Dhruv Kotian
Moksha A Suvarna
Pradyumna N
Shefalica
V.K.Vikhyath

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AFTERWORD

The seven-day study tour of Kathmandu, Nepal from 30-01-2025 to 05-02-2025 was the first international tour organized by Srinivas School of Architecture (SSA). Our students and accompanying faculty benefited from out of class room learning by observing firsthand the traditional architecture of Kathmandu valley, the earthquake resilient construction of vernacular houses and conservation of historic buildings. Also, part of the Intangible cultural experience we got a glimpse of local customs, clothing, local cusines and regional practices. I stongly believe this architectural journey of a thousand miles of learning, research and discovery will commence in the future with the first steps taken by this tour.

Ar. Leslie J. Dias
Professor, Srinivas School of Architecture

(Right) ©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Street of Bhaktapur.

My trip with the students to Nepal was something truly special. As a Visiting faculty, I didn't know what to expect-but what unfolded was a journey filled with learning, laughter, and connection. It was my first time travelling internationally with students, and seeing their excitement as they experienced a new culture and environment was incredibly heartwarming. Nepal had so much to offer-beautiful architecture, warm people, and a sense of calm that's hard to describe. We weren't just ticking off case studies; we were soaking in stories, sketching details, getting lost (sometimes literally!) in narrow lanes, and sharing quiet moments over cups of tea. Being around the students, watching them grow more curious, confident, and inspired every day, reminded me why I love teaching. This trip wasn't just about buildings-it was about people, culture, and connection. I truly hope students from Nepal will visit Mangalore someday and discover the richness of our heritage too.

Ar. Colin Pinto
Visiting Professor, Srinivas School of Architecture.

(Left) ©Dhruv Kotian, 2025.
Street of Bhaktapur.

(Bottom Left to Right) Ar. Shravya Hegde, Ar. Caroline D'Souza, Ar. Kumarchandra (Dean, SSA), Dr. Shinivasa Mayya D. (Principal SIT), Ar. Vasudev Shet (HoD, SSA), Ar. Ramdas Prabhu, Ar. Leslie Dias, Ar. Sangeeta S.;
(Middle Bottom Left to Right) Jesna Maben, Sonyel D' Souza, Nafeesa Areeba, Shefalica, Samruddhi, Sana Suresh, Nuthan Sadath, Priyadarshini, Parthipa M, Moksha A Suvarna, Arpita S Naik;
(Middle Top Left to Right) Prajwal R, Pranav Gatty, V.K.Vikhyath, Raghuveer Prabhu, Monisha K, Lakshmi Raj, Vaishnavi Venkatesh Jadhav, Ayishath Fahna Thasneen, Tanisha Haneef, Haleemah Saniyyah, Brahmith N Rao;
(Top Left to Right) Austin Christopher Cornelio, Suprith Karkera, Yakshith, Shreynic, Yashas Attavar, Shreesha H Kumar, Dhruv Kotian, Gaurav, Muhammad Kaif, Pradhyumna N, Rahan Raj, Syamkrishna C., Vishwamithra S. Chaithanya.

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